

Session 9: The Reward of the Overcomer

ETERNAL REWARDS FOR OBEDIENCE

Well, we are continuing in our study here on the seven churches in the book of Revelation, in Revelation 1-3. We have looked at each of the seven churches and I have mentioned the rewards for a moment or two during each of the sessions, as we have done our study on the seven churches.

In this teaching I want to go through all of the rewards. There are 20 of them. I guess you could add them up in several different ways, but there are 20 different rewards which Jesus mentions with His own lips and which He promises to those who will obey Him faithfully if they will walk in mature obedience.

Now most believers—I am not saying this as a rebuke but I am just saying this to kind of alert you—most believers are nearly illiterate concerning these rewards. If you ask somebody just randomly, “Give me five of the 20 rewards which Jesus spoke with His own lips”, I think that most believers would be stumbling—they would be stumbling. My point is not to say this as a rebuke, but to say this to wake us up. We are talking about the uncreated God—Jesus, fully God and fully man—in effect saying, “If you will press into Me this is what I will give you forever.”

MAKE IT YOUR PASSION TO KNOW THESE REWARDS

The church does not even know what it is that He is beckoning us to enter into in terms of connection with Him and the level of that connection.

The point is that after tonight I am trusting you are going to go out of here, making it one of your passions in life to know these 20 rewards and to take them seriously—to know that if Jesus offered them they are not irrelevant, idle or meaningless. They are real. They mean a lot. Jesus was not a little off base by offering this as a motivation.

Every now and then I run into somebody who says, “I am not really into the rewards.” I say, “Wait, stop before you say something foolish. Remember it is Jesus who is offering them.” He was not a little bit off base when He offered us rewards. You know He did not lose His noble motivation, when He offered them. He knew how important they were.

THE INTRODUCTION

Let’s look at the introduction and then we are going to read the 20 rewards. Two of them are mentioned twice: the garments and the positions of authority on the throne. Those are the two which Jesus repeats twice. Let’s look at the introduction first.

Revelation 1-3 is unique and significant in regard to rewards. Jesus gives more insight in our potential eternal rewards and He describes Himself—He gives titles and descriptions about Himself with His own lips—He does it more in this passage than in any other place in the Bible.

He gives 20 different rewards and a number of descriptions. We are going to go through those as well. We are going to spend a week—maybe two weeks—on the rewards, I don't know. I am not sure what we will do next week, but after that we are going to go through the names which Jesus spoke about Himself, revealing His own character, His ministry and His passion for us. We are going to put those all in a row too, from the seven churches of the book of Revelation.

ETERNAL REWARDS ARE NOT AUTOMATIC

Jesus is not speaking here to believers about receiving the gift of salvation. He is talking about receiving eternal rewards. This is really critical because as I have read commentaries on Revelation 2-3 over the years, I am surprised how many commentaries reduce these rewards to automatic dimensions of the gift of salvation. If they were automatic Jesus would not have offered them to the church with conditions. They are not automatic. They are not given to the church as guaranteed. They are given to the church based on the condition of wholeheartedness. They are not automatic. They are only given to the people who fulfill the conditions.

These rewards are given in various degrees and various measures, meaning that according to the measure of your loving obedience you may receive a certain measure of one of these rewards. Somebody else may receive a greater or lesser measure of that reward and somebody else may not receive any of the reward. It is based on the measure of your obedience or the measure of your love.

VARIOUS LEVELS OF FULFILLMENT

The next thing I want to say is that these rewards have various levels of fulfillment. Each of them have a measure of fulfillment in this age by the Holy Spirit—a little bit of it. They were not meant to be understood as having their full fulfillment in this age, but there is a little bit of a fulfillment now.

For instance, Jesus says, “I will give you the hidden manna” (Rev. 2:17, paraphrased), which speaks of feeding us on the Word of God. We receive this now a little bit, but we receive it a lot more in the age to come.

He says, “I will have you sit on a throne” (Rev. 3:21, paraphrased). We operate in authority a little bit now but there will be those who sit on thrones literally in the age to come. So there is a varying measure of fulfillment in this age, but even if it is a small measure, it is still worth going after.

In your quest to go after the small measure in this age, don't lose sight of the fullness of what Jesus is offering us in the age to come, but on the other hand do not get so locked into the future reward in the age to come, that you do not enter into at least a token, a prophetic token expression of it in this age.

HE WHO HAS AN EAR LET HIM HEAR

Pay attention to this, that when speaking about these rewards, Jesus says this one phrase every time: “He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says” (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Now He says this in relationship to each of the rewards. He says it in relationship to the whole message which He gives each of the seven churches, but particularly He says it related to the rewards. You are going to see that in a moment, it is always next to the rewards.

Now when Jesus says, “He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says”, Jesus is saying, “What I am telling you will require special attentiveness to understand” (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22, paraphrased). When Jesus says, “He who has an ear let him hear”, He is saying, “You are not going to get what I am saying if you only read this in a superficial way. There is more than meets the eye” (paraphrased).

So again, I am not trying to be critical of various commentators but many of them violate the spirit of this. They give the most superficial meaning to these rewards—the very thing Jesus warned us not to do. He says, “If you are really listening to what I am saying, there is more than meets the eye. Be attentive and go deep” (paraphrased).

The next thing it means when it says, “He who has ears let him hear what the Spirit is saying” — is that it will take the aid of the Holy Spirit to grasp these things. Meaning, as I read and study these 20 rewards, I ask the Holy Spirit to tell me what these things mean. I want a deeper understanding so I stir up my holy imagination, and I use the Word of God.

I want to stay within the boundaries of the written Word of God, but beloved there is a whole lot in the written Word which will give us significant hints to these 20 rewards—significant hints—but we have to have a heart to go after them.

MAKE THESE REWARDS ONE OF YOUR LIFE GOALS

I want to encourage you to make it your passion to really grasp these 20 rewards in the next couple of years, meaning, “Start now.” I do not mean, “Wait a couple of years to get around to it.” You are going to say, “Lord I am going to go after this. This is my destiny. This is my story written in advance. This is my future.”

Our beloved Jesus gave us the revelation of these rewards so that we would put them before us as a goal for our life to lay hold of.

I cannot imagine to how many believers in the last days the Lord is going to say in effect, “I beckoned you to understand this, but you were not interested in it. You were interested in gaining more in this age and just having more fun and recreation, and just kind of hanging out and wasting time. I gave you the invitation to understand the great things about your life that I wanted you to lay hold of.”

Again, my point is not to correct and to shame people. My point is to alert them, because this is God talking to the human heart. So I have made it a passion to know all 20 of these. I want to know them at a deeper level. The Lord might say something like, “Well, pray and fast and ask Me to unlock them to you.”

THESE REWARDS ARE ABOUT YOUR DESTINY

I want to challenge you—a couple of you will actually do this—to memorize all 20 of these. I mean, your life destiny is in the balance because if you are focused on where God wants to take you, there is a better chance you will get there. If you are not focused on it, you might stumble into it, but the chances of actually arriving at your goals are far greater if you aim at them and pray and fast, and ask God to help you get there.

Some people, many people, they are just saying, “Well, I will just kind of love God and take my chances”, when we talk about this kind of revelation and understanding.

THE 20 REWARDS

So there is more than meets the eye. Let’s read these rewards. Let’s read these 20 rewards. Now there are 22 in one sense, but two of them are repeated—the promise about garments and the promise about thrones. They are mentioned twice. So there are 20 rewards, or you could say 22. You could break it down and add it up more specifically and maybe say there are 24 or 25 rewards, depending on how you organize your thinking on this.

THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE CROWN OF LIFE

Let’s read Revelation 2:7. Jesus says, “He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”—I am just going to read them all—“eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of the garden” (Rev 2:7, paraphrased).

Eating from the tree of life in the midst of the garden is different than all of the eating which goes on in the eternal city forever. That is just a little tip off. It is more than just the food supply of the eternal city. He is talking about something very specific here.

He says in Revelation 2:10: “I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” He will not lose anything when the judgment of the second death is administered upon human history.

DO NOT FEAR THE JUDGEMENT OF THE SECOND DEATH

The day when the judgment of the second death is administered will be the most terrifying day of human history, but you will not have anything to fear in this most terrifying day of human history. Everything you have done in obedience will hold up in the most terrifying day of history. You will not lose a thing. That is powerful.

Now because most do not think about the day of the second death, it does not seem like that big of a promise, but I guarantee you that when we get near that day, even the city of God will tremble when the God’s wrath is fully released against all humans who did not obey God.

We will say, “Thank You for the blood of Jesus. Lord how much of what I did stays? How much of it is lost?” Jesus said, “I want you to know that on that terrifying day, when the whole human

race witnesses God's wrath against rebellion in it's fullness, you will not lose anything which was done in obedience, no matter how small.

THE HIDDEN MANNA AND THE WHITE STONE

Revelation 2:17. Now notice: every time one of these promises is given it says, "He who has an ear let him hear", in other words, "There is more than meets the eye. You have to be attentive to get it. It is going to take Holy Spirit revelation to go down below the surface" (Rev. 2:17, paraphrased).

It says in Revelation 2:17 (paraphrased): "He who has an ear let him hear. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat, some of it"—there is hidden manna in the age to come—"and I will give him a white stone."

Think of a white stone as the gold medal. It is like, you know, the guys win the championship game and then they get the ring. The white stone is like a medal or a ring. It has a name written on it. The Lord will write about you to describe your devotion to Him.

So you will receive a white stone. Do not think of it as just some little pebble. It is a precious stone which is filled with the glory of God. It will far surpass any championship ring the greatest athlete gets, or the gold medal for the greatest performance. It is a white stone—and the word "white" by the way is "bright and shining"—a precious stone, is what He is talking about. It is a diamond plus a lot more than a diamond.

It will have your name written on it. It will have the story of your devotion written on it. It is a name which nobody knows, meaning, only you and the Lord will know the fullness of your story, of your devotion. There will be things about your devotion to the Lord in this age that nobody can fully grasp besides you and the Lord. Even you will begin to grasp them at a whole other level in that day. What a glorious thing. So your name is your story. It is your testimony. The testimony of your love for God in this age will be carried over to the age to come.

WE WILL NEED THESE TRUTHS TO STABILIZE OUR HEARTS

Revelation 2:26-29: "He who overcomes I will give him power over the nations. I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says.

You know, sometimes He says, "He who has an ear let him hear", before the reward and sometimes after it. Why? I do not really know. I have gotten a few hints here and there, but go find out. Maybe you have got a few years, maybe you have got a few decades before you meet the Lord. Maybe you have got longer than that. You have got time to go and search this out. "Lord why did You say this phrase sometimes before and why did You say it sometimes after the rewards?"

These are the rewards—by the way, I forgot to mention—these are the rewards which Jesus knew the church would need in the crisis of history, when the events of the book of Revelation are unfolding. When the events of the book of Revelation are unfolding there is a great crisis in

the earth and there is a great release of the spirit of glory. There is the positive and the negative. Jesus knew these 20 rewards would stabilize the human heart in the crisis and in the glory.

You say, “Stabilize in the glory?” Yes! History tells us that when the glory of God is poured out, many of God’s servants get off base. When they are used in the glory of God, they trip in pride and they get more focused on the power than they do on the Lord. Many of them lose their way, so we need the rewards even in the realm of the glory, not just in the realm of the crisis and the trouble.

Jesus, who knows the human heart better than any man, said that these 20 rewards will stabilize you in the time when the crisis and the glory is at it’s all time high in human history.

I trust His leadership. I trust His insight into my heart. It is as if He says, “Mike, this is what you need to stabilize your heart in the glory and in the crisis.”

“Lord, I do not know why you chose these 20, but of one thing I am sure: You are right and I need them.” I want to feed my spirit on these 20 truths.

THE MORNING STAR AND THE WHITE GARMENTS

He says in Revelation 2:28: “I will give him the morning star.” Of course the morning star in its fullness is Jesus Himself. He says in Revelation 22:16: “I am the Morning Star.”

Revelation 3:5: “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments.” Again the word “white” is the word meaning “bright and shining.” Do not get locked in to just white. “White” is more than what we think when we think “white.” Think of shining and bright like a diamond. You will see that in a few moments.

You know, I say this kind of tongue and cheek, a little bit humorously, but I am really trying to disrupt a mindset people get stuck in. Everybody knows about the fact that they are going to have the white garments. They are going to have the white gown. They kind of imagine that several billion saints forever, for billions and billions of years or trillions—you know that is just the beginning of eternity—so for billions of years billions of saints will all have the same white T-shirt. They will wear it everyday forever. That is it.

It is as if God thought of all the beauty of the city, He thought of the beauty and the fragrance of the city, the beauty of the colors, the music, the throne, and the crowns. He thought of everything—the food, the fellowship, the mansions—everything, but He overlooked the clothing. Everyone has a white T-shirt forever. That is it, the same one.

DIFFERENT GARMENTS FOR DIFFERENT OCCASIONS

No. no! That is not what is going to happen. You will have an array of garments which you will use. In every different circumstance you will have different garments, just like in life now. Different occasions, different garments, and your heavenly wardrobe will reflect your devotion to the Lord in this life.

So, yes, we all have the basic robe of righteousness, it is true. We get that as a free gift, the free gift of the robe of righteousness, but beloved, this white garment has many different colors and hues and there are many different dimensions to our garments. It is not one white gown forever, that is it. No, there is a whole array of garments of different fabric, texture, fragrance, color and design for every different occasion forever.

We are talking about the God of glory who has no limitation of wisdom or resource, who has designed these clothes for His people. These clothes will show forth their devotion to the Lord.

You just study the clothing of the angels in the Bible—their clothing is diverse—and the clothing of the priesthood, which was God’s idea. He is the One who revealed the clothing of the priesthood as a token, an insight into the value He places on clothing in the age to come.

Well, Revelation 3:5 says, “He who overcomes will be clothed in white, bright garments”—many different types of garments. Do not get locked into the white T-shirt because if that is all there is and everybody gets the same, who cares. That is not all there is and everybody does not get the same. It is diverse, very diverse clothing which God will give people. They will wear and express their devotion to the Lord forever. The quality of our life in God—our love for Him—will be expressed in the garments we will wear.

YOUR NAME IS YOUR STORY

He says, “I will not blot your name out of the Book of Life” (Rev 3:5, paraphrased). In other words, your name is your story. He is not talking of losing your salvation here. He is talking about your story, which is recorded in the chronicles of heaven. It will never ever be negated, never. He says, “As a matter of fact, I will tell your story before the Father and the angels” (v. 5, paraphrased).

To confess your name does not mean one time, as you are going through the gate. The Lord might say, “Mike Bickle, pass.”

“Hi, Jesus.”

“Hi, Mike. Well, come on. Move on. Next.”

That is not what this verse means—only one time in eternity. It means that He will tell the story of your devotion to the Father and to the angels, time without number. He will tell your story because it moves Him. It moves the Father and it will move you every time He confesses your story.

TELLING PEOPLE’S STORY

I mean, one of the things which I love to do is, I love to talk about my friends. You know that I have been doing IHOP–KC for 9 years but I have been ministering a lot longer than that, so it is beyond IHOP–KC. But certainly in the IHOP–KC world I love to tell people about so and so’s

dedication. I love it. It moves my heart. It moves their heart. It moves the hearts of other people when you tell people's story. I love to do that here in IHOP–KC, but I also think of some of the ones I have known years before IHOP–KC. I love still to tell their story. I read a biography of a dedicated man or woman and I tell the story of the biography.

That is the spirit of Jesus confessing your name. He is telling your story. It will be told many, many, many times. Then the angels will tell it—I am just reading into that. Others will tell it. You know, I read another guy's or gal's biography and I am telling you their story and then you buy the book. Then you tell it and it keeps going on. Well, that dynamic will not stop. They will tell your story forever.

The story of your devotion, which moves the heart of Jesus, will move the heart of the Father. It will touch the angels and it will just reverberate mouth to mouth throughout eternity as people are inspired by the people who obeyed the Lord.

BELIEVING WITHOUT SEEING

You know that is what Jesus meant in John 20:29 (paraphrased), when He spoke to Thomas and said, "Blessed are you who believe without seeing."

You only get to believe without seeing for one moment in history—during your time on the earth. Moses said that we get 70 years on the earth. You only get to believe without seeing once in billions and billions and billions of years and there is a blessing for believing without seeing. The blessing is that you get eternal rewards for it. God stamps it on your life, your character, and your name forever.

He looked at Thomas and He effectually said, "There is a great blessing if you believe and you obey with abandonment without seeing."

Because there is a time in history when the great exchange takes place. There is a great exchange. The exchange rate is really high when you do not see, and in the resurrection when you *do* see, it is still meaningful, it is still powerful, but the exchange is just really different. So that is what we receive right now: eternal rewards. What a blessing!

How many of you want the blessing resulting from obedience? Believing means obeying. Responding is what it means to believe—to respond in confidence, to respond in confident obedience, to respond wholeheartedly. Not to get halfway there and then to decide, "I do not know if I want to follow through with my obedience." To be obedient without seeing means to be confident in your response to the end. It is as if the Lord says, "You do that and there will be a blessing beyond anything you can imagine forever."

THE LORD WILL TELL YOUR STORY FOREVER

Imagine—Revelation 3:5—the Lord confessing your name, telling your story. Again, it is not a one time deal. It is not the moment you pass through the gate into city. He does not say "Hi!" to you once and that is it. He tells your story forever if there is a story to tell.

Is there a story to tell? Everybody's life has a story, but that is not what I mean. Everybody has a story—good or bad. I am saying, “Is there a noble response?” I do not mean that you did something which made you famous. I am not talking about that. Not something which got the attention of man. Have you lived in a way which gets the attention of God, because you have obeyed Him in secret? Do you have a story that is worth telling, which will move God and the angels?

I tell you, what moves Him is obedience in secret—that is what moves Him—when no one is looking. It is the way we express our love to Him. It is the arena in which we express our love to Him. It is our obedience in secret.

He says, “I will confess your name. I will tell your story. I will tell it to the angels, and the saints will hear it again” (Rev. 3:5, paraphrased)—just like we hear each other's story. I mean, I read 1 Samuel, I read the life of David and I hear his story. You know what? When I read the life of David, in one way it is Jesus telling the story of David because He put it in the Bible. It is that same spirit. It is that same idea.

The Lord says, “No, I am not going to stop this. I am not going to change My personality. I am going to tell your story forever” (Rev. 3:5, paraphrased).

THEY WILL WORSHIP BEFORE YOUR FEET

Revelation 3:9: Now this is the church in Philadelphia. He really piles up the promises. He gives 7 rewards to the Philadelphia church. This is the church to whom He does not give any correction. He says, “They will worship before your feet. The people who persecute you on the last day will bow their knee to Me” (v. 9, paraphrased). It does not mean that they will be saved, but they will bow their knee.

Every knee will bow to Jesus—believers and unbelievers. They will say, “You are God! You are God! You are God!” Some will be on their way to the lake of fire. Others will be on their way to the eternal city, but every knee will bow, and every demon.

Jesus said, “I will see to it that the people who persecute you bow their knee to worship Me before your feet. That is how I will vindicate you in front of them because you chose Me. It was wise that you chose Me” (v. 9, paraphrased).

“You say, “Oh, what is that about?”

Jesus says that it is His zeal to vindicate the people who love Him, because during our time on the earth we love Him and the others do not value that love, so they mock it and they oppose you while Jesus is silent—so we think. But He is recording it all.

I WILL LET THEM KNOW THAT I LOVED YOU

You know it is almost like the principle that if we do not worship God the rocks will cry out. It is in essence as if He is saying, “If you did not love Me, the rocks would cry out, but you did love Me and I appeared silent. But I will shout it from the rooftops in front of the people who mocked you—such is My zeal for you. And I will let them know that I loved you” (v. 9, paraphrased).

It is not just that they will bow down before you when they worship Jesus, but Jesus will, in effect, say, “Do you see that guy over there?” He will name your name and say, “I love him and I am the King of Kings.” He will call you by name, look you right in the eye and say, “I love you” (v. 9, paraphrased). And the person who persecuted you will say “Oh, the worst thing I ever did besides ignoring Jesus was getting in the way.”

It is not about making the persecutor feel bad, but it is about justice in the realm of love. He loves us. In His eyes it is not only that we love Him but that He will proclaim how He valued our love.

So the point is not that you know how to goad the ones who missed it. It is to vindicate with justice those who did it right. Justice requires vindication to take place in the sight of the ones who mocked you.

Is it not amazing that Jesus even thinks this way? Every single act of obedience is recorded and we will be alive and remembered in His heart forever.

I WILL MAKE YOU A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE

Revelation 3:12 (paraphrased): “I will make you a pillar in the temple of God. You will not go out anymore.” I mean, this is an example of how you could make that two or three promises. You could be a pillar, number one; in the temple, number two; and never go out, number three. But I just make it one promise. It is just one of the 20. You can break it down in several different ways and number them if you wanted to, but it means that you will have a place of honor in God’s city forever and a place of authority.

I WILL WRITE THREE NAMES ON YOU

He then says, “I will write on you the name of My God, the Father—I will give you supernatural understanding of My Father. And I will write on you the name of the city—I will give you ownership and authority in the city and I will give you supernatural understanding of how this city works” (Rev. 3:12, paraphrased). And then He says, “I will write My own name on you. I will tell you things about My heart you have no idea about” (v. 12, paraphrased).

When the Lord writes His name on His people, this means that He releases not only understanding but also the ability to feel it—the impartation of it.

THE NAME OF THE CITY AND HIS OWN NAME

You say, well, why do we need the name of the city? Have you ever been in a 1500 mile city before? Do you know how far 1500 miles is? From here to the east coast, that is the city. You

get out in the middle of the city and say, “Now, where am I? How does this thing work?” That is a big city. It is not only 1500 miles in one direction, but it is also 1500 miles high.

You are going to want the authority and the understanding of that city in your spirit, trust me. He says, “I will write it on you. I will put the compass—the understanding of the glory of the city—and the authority to move about the city right inside of you” (v. 12, paraphrased). That is what it means to have the city written on you—the name of it written on you. It is the authority to move about the city. Everybody will have the authority and the ability to understand the city at different levels.

I have been in a few big cities over the years. They are overwhelming, I mean, you could get lost in them. That is similar to what is going on in this city. Cities are mysterious. But there is a city of which He says, “I will write its name on you” (v. 12, paraphrased). Everybody will have this to a varying degree. Everybody will have this given to them at a different level of authority and understanding.

And then He will write His own name on us—His own new name. That means that there are facets of His heart which He has not made known yet, but which He is going to make known to you, because His name means His heart, His function, His emotions. There are dimensions of Jesus which He wants to unveil to us forever and forever and forever.

BUY GOLD FROM ME

Revelation 3:18: He says, “Buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich”—rich in the age to come. We get gold in this age. It is called faith. Faith is not just believing, faith is responding. Faith is obedience. Faith and obedience are identical. Some people say, “You know I have faith but my obedience lacks.” No, faith and obedience are identical. Faith is confident responsiveness to God. It is you having confidence while you are responding.

He says, “Get gold” (v. 18, paraphrased). So, gold is our faith or our response to God in this age, but there is gold in the age to come. You can buy it by your obedience right now. You say, “What do I want gold for?” Well, you will have gold in your mansion. You will have gold in your clothing. You will have gold in your crown. You will have gold in the precious stones which God gives you—the trophies so to speak.

“Trophies” is not the best word. A wedding ring is a trophy of sorts, a trophy of love. There will be gold in many facets of your life. It is as if He says, “I will give it to you in your dwelling, in your crowns—the medals I give you, so to speak, these precious stones which depict your love relationship to Me.” You will want that gold.

BUY BRIGHT GARMENTS FROM ME

He says, “I will give you white garments” (Rev. 3:18, paraphrased). Here He says it again, this is the second time. In Revelation 3:5 He mentions the white garments, but now He mentions them again. Instead of “white” put the word “bright”, bright shining garments. There are many facets of the garments. Not just one layer, many layers. There are many different types of garments in

the age to come. And why do you want those garments? You need to be clothed so that in eternity the shame of your nakedness—it means the shame of your obedience to the Lord being incomplete—will not be seen.

Now people will not be pointed out as sinful in the eternal city, as if someone will say, “Oh, that is the guy who did this and that.” No, it will not be a pointing out of overt sin, but it will be the lack of the garments which will indicate their dedication in this age. I do not want to be lacking the garments which depict my love relationship with the Lord in the age to come.

SHAME AS RELATED TO GARMENTS

Everyone has the gift of righteousness and everybody has the robe of righteousness as a free gift, but I want garments which depict the love I have for Jesus in this age. He said that to lack those garments would be shameful in that age.

People say, “Hey, how are you doing?” They will not know what you did wrong but they will know that you lived selfishly. They will say, “Oh, that is shameful.”

Here is an amazing thing. Most of the saints that I interact with in the West are so grounded—which is glorious—so grounded in the reformation, the justification by faith message of Martin Luther—well it is really the message of Paul, which is the message of Jesus—we are so focused on justification by faith—which we need to be—but there is a really low revelation in the protestant church of the value and necessity of our obedience. We are so locked into what we get free in the city, that we lose sight of the value of what we do after we are born again.

The idea of having shame in the age to come is an idea that most Protestants never grapple with but it is in the Bible a number of times—that we would live this way and that way, so that we would not be ashamed as believers in that day. I do not believe that people will be ashamed because what they did will be unveiled. I believe that what they did not do, in terms of their devotion to the Lord, will be apparent.

The shame is almost always related to garments. The eight times in the book of Revelation that garments are mentioned—several times when the garments are mentioned by Jesus—He mentions the element of shame. It is as if He says, “You will be ashamed as believers if you do not have the garments that depict your devotion to Me.”

THE VALUE OF OBEDIENCE

As Protestants—and most of us in this room have a Protestant background—we typically have a glorious view of the free gift of salvation—our entrance into the kingdom. You cannot overemphasize the value of that, but because of this we have ended up—I am talking about the whole church in the west—with a very minimal insight into the value of what we do—our obedience—after we are born again.

The idea of standing before the Lord with remorse is not in the mind of most Protestants, because we are aware that we will not be penalized and kicked out of the free gift of living in the city, but we assume that means that we will be fully happy with all of our decisions.

We will not be. There will be remorse in the body of Christ though no fear of expulsion from the city, none whatsoever. The gift of righteousness will be ours. There will be no sense of being kicked out of the city but we will have pain when we see His beauty and how much He wanted us to walk with Him in love, how much He loved us and how much He wooed us and how little so many of us responded. So, He talks about that and He says, “You want white garments” (Rev. 3:18, paraphrased). This is Jesus talking. Jesus has really good doctrine. He says, “You want white garments” (v.18, paraphrased). He is talking to born again believers here. He is not talking to unbelievers.

THE SHAME OF YOUR NAKEDNESS

Why do you want white garments? Because of the shame of your nakedness. Nakedness in eternity means lack of rewards in the realm of garments. That is what nakedness means. It is talking about lacking the garments that depict the reward of our love for God. He says you will have shame on that day. You really will.

Then He says it again in Revelation 16:15, He says, “You do not want to lose your garments. You really don’t.” Because we can actually gain garments—I am talking about beyond the gift of salvation, I am talking about in response to our obedience—and we can lose them.

You may walk in obedience for four or five years with a real responsiveness to the Lord, a really fresh walk with God. I have seen it happen many times during the 30 years I have been in ministry. I have seen a lot of people go hard for five years, but the next ten years they are just walking in compromise and they have lost their freshness in God. They are not in the Word anymore. The spirit of prayer is gone. That earnest desire for obedience is something in the past. They are still in the church, they still might be a leader in the church, but their freshness with God has been gone for ten years. That is how a person loses his garments. It is not because they have a bad day or a bad month. It is because they go for a decade in unresponsiveness or whatever the time is.

So Jesus is warning them. He says, “You do not want the nakedness of your faith to be revealed. You do not want the nakedness—the lack of your faith—to be made known in that day. Again it is not that a deed will be pointed out. It is covered by the blood of Jesus, but the deed is the lack of responsiveness, the nakedness of our faith instead of the fullness of our responsiveness.

WE WILL DINE WITH HIM

He goes on in Revelation 3:20 and says, “If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and I will dine with him.” Can you imagine?

Now we can dine with the Lord in this age through worship, prayer, and fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit. We dine with Him in that limited sense, which I think is awesome. I say limited

because I am only thinking of how open faced it will be in the age to come. It is glorious in this age. It is the most glorious thing we can do in this age—to dine with Him—but compared to where it is going, it is only a token in this age, although it is a glorious token. I want more of it.

So we dine with Him now, but beloved we are going to dine with Him not only figuratively, we are literally going to eat meals in the presence of Jesus and talk to Him. I mean face to face. He says, “You will dine with Me” (v.20, paraphrased).

I do not want to just sit in the cafeteria where Jesus is a billion tables away talking to you. As if I look over there, and I see you wave at me a billion tables away.

“Hey Mike.”

“Hey bro, it is awesome over here.”

I guess I am technically dining with Him because I am in the same room. No, I want to be there next to Him, next to Jesus. That is kind of cute but it is actually real, because you know in the age to come Jesus—I will throw this out, I say this all the time and it disturbs people when they hear it for the first time—in the age to come Jesus will be a man in a human body.

JESUS WILL HAVE A HUMAN BODY IN THE AGE TO COME

Jesus will be omnipresent through the Holy Spirit, He will. We will say, “Jesus”, and we will feel His presence no matter where we are in the city, but we will actually see Him in His physical body and we will go to Him. He will be in one place at one time, like He was in His earthly ministry. He will be a human forever in a human body. He will not be walking with you in the park and walking with me in the park at the same moment in the flesh. He will only be walking with one of us in the park, at that moment.

Now by the Holy Spirit we will say, “Jesus”, and we will feel His presence, but I want more than that, I want to be actually talking to Him. He will talk to us and we will talk to Him.

There are going to be several billion people who want to talk to this man all the time. Think of the 12, the 70, and the 120, well, make it several billion in the resurrection.

Jesus will really have a human body, really sitting on a throne and we will be called to talk to Him. He will summon us to His throne. We will dine with Him. This will be awesome.

WE WILL PERSONALLY INTERACT WITH HIM

But I actually want—and I am going to give you the division for this—physical, personal contact and interaction with Him, not just by the Spirit way over on the edge of the city. I want to be in the room talking to Him like Peter, James and John did because, beloved, He will have a physical body forever and ever. It is not figurative, it is real.

Again, by the Holy Spirit we will all be able to commune with Him. We will feel His presence. He will know our mind. He will hear our heart, but I want to look at His—I want to touch His arm. I want Him to touch my shoulder and say, “Hey, Mike!” Oh, I love it.

“Jesus, I love You.”

“I know you do. I have been receiving that for years.”

“Oh, I just want to tell You again. And, Lord, do You love me?”

“Oh, Mike, I love you so much.”

Ah, this is worth everything at that time, when you will be right there. Wait, wait just a second. Maybe it will be the other way around. Maybe I will be there and you will say, “Mike, shh; wait, wait. I am talking to Him.”

THE INVITATION TO SIT WITH HIM ON HIS THRONE

Revelation 3:21: “To him who overcomes I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne.” That is indescribable that we would sit with Jesus on thrones.

Now not everybody will sit on a throne. I mean, let’s just make up the numbers because I do not know. Nobody knows the numbers. Let’s say there were a billion believers from Adam to today—a billion believers through history. Let’s say there is a second billion who are on the earth right now—that is what those who do the statistics say. They say that there are about a billion born again believers in the earth. Some say 700 million. Who knows? Say a billion. And say, there will be a billion in the great harvest that is coming.

So, there were a billion believers in the past, a billion believers coming, that is approximately 2-3 billion saints—2-3 billion—but there will not be 2-3 billion thrones. Maybe there will be millions of thrones, I do not know. No one knows the numbers.

I challenge you to think about this. Most assume that everybody will have a crown and everybody will have a throne. That is absolutely not biblical. There is nowhere in the Bible where it says this.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS IN THE AGE TO COME

Every believer will have the gift of righteousness—the robe of righteousness—to get into the city. We will all have a resurrected body. We will all have God’s smile and favor on us. We will all be citizens in the city but after that—I am sure there are a few other things which we will all have exactly in common—but after that, for most of the things which we have, there will be great differences in the measure of the glory and of our capacity and how we interact with the Lord.

Our relationship with the Lord will be very different for everyone. There will be those who know the Lord—I mean they will have a proximity, a physical proximity to the physical Jewish king named Jesus of Nazareth, fully God, fully man. They will be able to have access to His immediate physical presence in a way that others will not. It will not be based on how famous you were on the earth or how big your ministry was. It will be based on the responses of your heart in love to Him in secret. It has nothing to do with how famous you were.

I think we are going to be surprised at the judgment seat of Christ which I call “the great equalizer.” It is when everything is equalized. We are going to be surprised at some of the really famous ministries—they will have the least reward. And some of those we never heard of, will have the greatest reward. I mean, I really think it will be that way.

IT IS HARD FOR THE RICH TO ENTER THE KINGDOM

In Matthew 19:22-24, Jesus told the rich young ruler, “It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” That means not just the physically rich or the financially rich, but it is hard for those who are rich in fame and influence. The more influence I get—the same is true of you—the more difficult it is to stay focused.

It is not just rich in money, it might be rich in favor. It might be rich in influence. The more money and the more influence we have, the more effort it takes to stay focused at the heart level, in humility and love. Not just because of pure pride, even though there is always a pride element in those things. It is more than that. The weight of the responsibility just simply buries us.

It is hard to enter, but not impossible. It is hard for a person who receives increase to enter—to experience the kingdom in an ever increasing way.

Now Jesus was saying this and we think it means that it is hard for a rich man to get into the kingdom. We think of getting into the kingdom initially. I think we miss a lot if we limit that truth to only getting into the kingdom. As if it only means that it is hard for a rich man to become born again. That is not exactly what He is saying. He certainly means that it is hard for a rich person to experience the kingdom.

To enter means to experience. It is a message as appropriate to a believer as it is to an unbeliever. It is a message as appropriate to an anointed ministry as it is to one which is not. Because the richer you are in influence, money or favor—again put the pride issue aside. There is a lot to say on that, but that is not even what I am focusing on—I am talking about the sheer weight of managing our time in a way where we stay focused on the Lord.

THE GROWTH OF YOUR HEART

I have met many a guy—I have done it a bit myself over the years—when the increase comes we find ourselves having less time to stay locked in. I have known just lots of guys in ministry over 30 years. I have seen them grow from small ministries to large ones, and in that 10 or 20 year process their heart went from really big to really small.

I do not want a growing ministry and a decreasing heart. I want a growing heart and if I can have a growing ministry without injuring my heart in God, then I want a growing ministry, but if the growth of my influence injures the size of my heart, I do not want the increase of influence. That influence will mean nothing where we are going. The only thing that will matter will be the size of our heart-response to the Lord. The Lord requires us to turn down opportunities for the sake of increase, because we are committed to the increase of our heart.

Many people cannot receive this. They take every opportunity for increase no matter what it does to their heart. If it brings more money, they say “yes.” The question should be, “If I take the job with more money what will happen to my heart in the next few years?” Not even just the pride element, but the time element. Will I have time and strength for fasting and prayer? “Well, I have so many new responsibilities, I am not sure I will.” I would turn that job down and the same with growth in ministry.

THE TEST OF INCREASE

I have had several times over the years where my ministry grew a lot in a short amount of time, relatively speaking. It was really small growth in reality but it was a lot compared to the year before. Several times the Lord has in effect told me, “Who said that was Me? What if it was Me testing you? What if it was Me giving you an opportunity to say “no”, because you cared about your heart-connect with Me?”

For most folks in the western world the value is growth, that’s the value. You get more influence, more money, more honor, more stuff and you think that it must be God, so you take it, but the kingdom economy is growth of the heart. If we can handle the growth of the other things without it injuring our heart, that is good. Jesus would say to us, “Do not be deceived by that. Do not think you are different than everybody else.” There are times to say “no” to influence, favor, and increase so that our heart increases.

Well, that was the easiest message I ever gave. That is page one. Let’s stand. We will just end with that, but you have got at least the 12 pages of notes on the internet.

THE LORD MAY BE SPEAKING TO YOU

There are some of you in this room right now and the Lord was talking to you these last five minutes. I feel like I went on a Holy Spirit assignment these last five minutes. There are some of you in this room right now—God promised you increase. It is the promise of God. He even gave you the increase, but you have been in the increase for a year or two, or three and your heart is decreased. And the Lord might say, “What are you going to do about that?”

“But Lord, the increase was from You.”

He might say, “Yes, but your heart—I have an inheritance in your heart as well. I have an agenda for your heart. You get to choose.”

The Lord is actually telling some of you in this room to decrease some of your profile, to decrease some of your stuff which is increasing, to make time for your heart to increase. I am not just talking about the visitors. I am talking about the IHOP–KC staff. I am talking about the IHOP–KC leaders. I am talking about Mike Bickle. I am talking about me, because that is what the Lord has been speaking to me about just in these last weeks—about decreasing. I was giving a little bit of my own confession there, but I felt like the Lord is wooing some of you.

So I want to ask if there is anyone in this room who is saying, “You know, I think I am in a season where I need to draw back on some of my activity—whether it is increase in the job or the church or whatever, just increase in activity, let’s just call it that—I must draw back because my heart is shrinking while my stuff, even my ministry, is increasing. If that is you I would like you to raise your hand. I would like you to come and stand in the aisles, if you would. Just come and stand in the aisles and make a single file, so we can pray for you—just a single file instead of two. Anybody else, I think there are more. My point is not to get a bunch of people in the aisles, but I think there are more of you.

Some of you have said, “Oh man, I would love to have the dilemma of too much increase. I am in so much decrease right now, I could stand a little temptation with increase. How many relate to that? OK, there you go. I have been there too a few times saying, “Lord give me a little increase. Let me know what is going on here.”

TWO PRAYERS

Let’s just pause for a moment even before we start to worship. Everybody close your eyes for a moment. The Holy Spirit is wooing different ones of you. He is wooing us to decrease. He wants you to down-size. He wants some of you to down-size your ministry, some your job, some your relationships, some your social life, some the amount of time you play, some the amount of places you go.

Maybe you are a conference junkie. You just go to every prophetic conference, you just cannot miss one. The Lord might say, “I am here. I am with you. Just stop it. Sit still. Be at home. Let Me talk to you.”

I feel as if there are some others of you, you do not have to come into the aisle. That is not the point, but in your heart you are saying, “Lord, yes, that is me.” I tell you it is the wisdom of God for you to sign up to have a bigger heart. The Lord is telling you that these 20 rewards are real and they are forever, they are forever.

I am going to encourage you to pray this prayer, all of you, just quietly in your heart, just repeat after me in your own heart and in your own words. I am not telling you to repeat the words aloud, but just in your own heart. I will say the prayer and then you decide if you want to pray it: “Lord, if I need to slow down tell me! Tell me! Tell me if I need to slow down, if I need to down-size, tell me!” That is prayer number one.

We are going to go to prayer number two. “If I do not listen, intervene anyway.” Do you have the courage pray that? Do you trust Him enough for that? “Intervene anyway, if I do not listen to You. Slow me down.”

THE REWARDS ARE IN THE BALANCE

Beloved these 20 rewards are in the balance of this. You know it might sound as if this is a neat prayer. Beloved, you do not want to lose garments or gold or the Lord confessing your story on that day. You do not want to lose any of it because things got big down here.

You are going to say, “Lord talk to me. Tell me. If I do not listen, I am asking You if You love me Lord, because You love me, intervene anyway, wake me up, get my attention!”

“Now Lord, all over this room I ask You for a spirit of abandonment, a spirit of dedication to the Lord. I ask You for a spirit of dedication and abandonment.”

You might be leading a house of prayer and working yourself straight into a backslidden state, while leading a house of prayer. I am not saying that you should quit your job in order to join a house of prayer. That is not what I am talking about. There are guys at IHOP–KC, who are losing their walk with God while running IHOP–KC, I mean right here in Kansas City. Our leaders are constantly—I do it, I have done it a couple of times in 9 years—our leaders are constantly confessing, “We are losing our connection with the Lord by leading at IHOP–KC.”

There is no automatic answer to this. You might be right in the middle of a prayer ministry and not praying. It happens all the time.

We are going to worship for a few minutes and then we are going to sing with our spirit. We are going to wait on the Lord and then I am going to invite different ones of you to come and lay hands on these. Just any time in the next five or ten minutes if you want to come and lay hands on the people standing in the aisles, do that.

You are all welcome to pray for the people but first we are going to worship for a few minutes and sing with our spirit, and we are going to linger for a little while too.