

## Redemptive Vision for the Church

When God gives vision, it is because He wants to change the world. I believe that God wants to impart a vision that will equip the saints of the Lord Jesus Christ to disciple nations. I believe He wants to give us a vision that will allow us to fulfill the great commission.

Vision is prophetic revelation and insight that is given to a specific people that is applicable to a specific situation and to a specific time.

Proverbs 29:18 says "where there is no vision or revelation the people cast off restraint." No boundaries are established for them. They don't know how to think or feel. They don't know what they are seeing or how to interpret what they see. They do not know how to live.

In I Samuel 3:1, there was no vision in those days. There was no prophetic word coming to the nation of Israel. They had religion. They had the law, the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrifices. They had all the form and all the structure that had been given to them by divine revelation through the Law of Moses. But because there was no vision, lawlessness and iniquity and rebellion abounded.

God wants to give vision so that we have a purpose for living, so that we have a goal we are aiming for. I think it is true: If you are aiming for nothing you generally hit it. God wants to reveal clearly to us what His intentions are so that they begin to circumscribe our life. We begin to live, to think, to pray, to believe and to obey--every aspect of our life comes to be based on the vision of God for His people.

I want to impart to you a vision for evangelism and for discipleship that fits the situation in which we find ourselves in the West; that fits the times in which we live. God knows our times and He wants us to understand our times and to know what we ought to do.

I Chronicles 12:32 talks about the sons of Issachar who understood the times and knew what Israel was to do. That speaks of the importance of apostolic and prophetic ministry. It is the prophetic ministry that understands the time. It is the apostolic ministry that knows what to do. In the New Testament we see the apostolic and the prophetic joined together. They lay the foundation of which

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. They bring the revelation that has been hidden through ages past, that has been a mystery and is now revealed to God's people as His overall strategy and plan for the world-- understanding the times, knowing what to do.

## **People of the Holy Spirit**

We are people of the Holy Spirit which means we are prophetic. We are people who are anointed. We are people who have a commission and a mandate to be stewards of all the works of God's hands. That includes the created order as well as the souls of man. So I want to impart to you that passion and vision once again to become a people of history, a people of science, a people of philosophy, a people of culture, so that we can be better in the world than the people who are in the world.

We need to see our vocation as our mission field. It is the place where God wants to speak prophetically to the world. It's where He's called us. It's where He's placed us. Whatever we do to the glory of God is full time Christian ministry. Whether you are a lawyer, a politician, a homemaker, an engineer, an assembly line worker or a mechanic. Whatever you are doing in the plan and purpose of God that is being done to the glory of God, is full time Christian ministry. Where you are is your mission field. That truth desperately needs to be restored to the church.

## **Disciples Not Of the World**

Turn to John 17:14 and following. I want you to read some words from the Lord Jesus Himself about being in the world but not of it. This is the great prayer of unity that Jesus prayed to the Father on behalf of his disciples. This is the night in which He was betrayed. They were sitting at the Lord's table.

Jesus says in verse 14, "I have given them [that is the disciples] your Word. And the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

If the world hates us, we are doing something right. Always bear that in mind. If the world does not hate us, we need to examine what we are standing for.

Verse 15: "I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one."

Notice Jesus' thrust is that we are not expected to be out of this world. But when battling with temptation, we can expect to be kept from the evil one. "I do not pray that you should take them out of that system." Catch that. "But that you should keep them from the evil one." I would encourage you to ruminate on that verse and pray on that verse. Allow the Holy Spirit to open that verse up in revelation to you. Jesus does not want us out of this world even though this world hates us and even though we are not of this world.

I think that is important. First of all, Jesus says of His disciples they are not of the world. He says of Himself, "I am not of the world." But the thing that we really need to grab a hold of is that the world will hate those who are not of the world. So the more we align our lives with these Biblical facts the more we are inviting hostility and persecution in our lives.

Persecution is a theme that is in every New Testament book.

Some books deal exclusively with that theme--the Epistle of the Hebrews, Peter's First Epistle, the Book of Revelation. Jesus said that you will be hated by all nations for His name sake. All nations.

Now that kind of hits home for me because I am interested in all nations. I want to disciple all nations and yet what that promise states, and it is a promise, is that I will be hated by all nations for His name sake. Those who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. If your love and your heart's affection is upon the Lord, and not upon the things of the world, the world will hate you.

Verse 16. "They (the disciples) are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." Now He says that twice. It is like the bread to the sandwich because He wants to get that revelation in our hearts. We have nothing to do with any society or cultural system that is opposed to God.

John 17:17-18: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."

That is our mission field, Beloved. Remember the parable of the wheat and the tares? Jesus says the field is the world. We are sent into that world. God wants us to be within that world. It is there that God wants us to work. It is within that system that He is going to keep us from the evil one. It is within that system that we are going to expose the works of the evil one and overcome him by God's power.

John 17 verse 19: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified by the truth."

I see two parallel truths running through these verses:

### ***1) Holy People Set Apart***

The first is sanctification. We need to be a holy people, set apart for God's plans and purposes, living according to His precepts, loving what He loves, hating what He hates. What He values, we value. His priorities are our priorities. We are set apart. We are holy. We are sanctified. But it is from that position of sanctification that the Lord says that we are not to be taken from this world. Rather we are to be sent into the world in the same way that the Father has sent Him into the world. So while we are living in this world, we are not to be of this world. Our affections are in a completely different place.

### ***2) Holy People Make Things Holy***

Let's turn to Zechariah 14:20. There are a lot of examples in the Word of God I could have given you for this point, but I like this one the best. "In that day holiness to the Lord shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem in Judea shall be holiness to the Lord of Hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts."

What that passage talks about is that what is secular and viewed as common is going to be made clean and be made holy just by the fact it is under the new covenant with spiritual people who can

consecrate these things unto the Lord and redeem them and use them in a restored way. If we are a spiritual people doing something, it is a spiritual activity.

My wife does spiritual activities all day--cooking meals, washing dishes, cleaning the house, she runs a day care out of the house, changing diapers, taking care of the children. That is her call. That is her ministry. She makes the house into a sanctuary which makes all the activities done within that house as unto the Lord.

Can you see it? Whatever we as spiritual people do becomes spiritual. Whatever we do in the will of God as godly people becomes godly. Whatever we do in obedience to the will of the Lord allows God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So if the Lord says, "Go play golf," you are supposed to be out resting and relaxing and playing golf. That is the will of God for you and that becomes a holy and spiritual activity. If the Lord says, "get on the floor and play with your children," (which the Lord says to me very regularly) I want you to know that is a godly, spiritual activity. Piggy back rides, airplanes and helicopters totally out of control, and all the games we play, it's holy. It is godly because we are doing it, touching it.

You can read a secular book. You can listen to secular music, if it is not bondage or stronghold to you. That is a very good qualification. If the Lord is giving you a purpose and there is a delight that is holy and pure that is involved with that, that can become a spiritual activity.

We are called to be in this world because it is in this world that the sinners are to be found. But sin is not to be a practice and a way of life with us. For the church to be in the world is okay, but for the world to be in the church is not okay.

### **Angels Ride Bicycles**

I have a friend in Malaysia who is in his late twenties who got a vision in this Moslem country to establish home groups of young people. He went from village to village preaching the gospel and the young people would come. He gets them set up in home groups. It is his practice every day to bicycle from home group to home group. He spends the entire day going from one place to another encouraging the leaders and the people that are there. These groups are growing. Some of them are up to 60-70 in each house.

Moslem authorities are so upset that they have hired an assassin team to murder him. We know this because one of the members of the assassin team approached him one day. He came up to him, identified himself and said, "We have a contract to take you out. We will do that. We have been watching you for two weeks and you are so predictable it is pathetic. You leave your house at the same time every day and pedal to the same place and you leave that place and you pedal to the next place. We have been lying in wait for two weeks to ambush you. We're going to get you."

My friend had to ask the question, "If you have been lying in wait for two weeks, what is the waste of time? Why haven't you done it?"

The assassin answered, "You know very well why we haven't done it."

"No, I don't," my friend said.

"You have fifteen huge bodyguards on bicycles! One of these days we are going to catch you without those bodyguards." Angels can ride bicycles!

These are the kinds of things that are happening around the world. That is why I have an optimistic faith. We hear the news about all the dark and dreadful things that are happening, but they do not have an eye to see the glorious things that are happening. What we would call revival as it is Biblically defined is happening in much of the Third World. Even in Moslem nations. Moslem nations especially in Asia are being transformed.

## **Get God's Attitude**

The Holy Spirit gives vision. You know you are being authorized to do something. There is an authority. The Holy Spirit inside wants to rise up and do something. We need to rise up in order for it to get done.

We can't control the flow of history, but we can control our attitude toward it. That is what God wants to get across to us. We cannot control what is happening in the world, but God wants us to get

His attitude and His perspective so that we can begin to be salt and light. We need to be skillful in our fields and do all the work. We need to do more work than is required because we need to be best. We need to take the gift that is within us and be the best we can possibly be.

Not all of us are going to rise to the top. But we are going to have influence with our lives and our testimonies wherever we are. We need to strategize now and begin to open up every avenue of this world, every avenue of this culture for the gospel because God is already there.

We don't have authority to do whatever we want. We can't think that because we have God the Holy Spirit within us that we can do anything we want. We have to be led by the Holy Spirit into what we get involved with.

Then we have the authority and spiritual protection and the Greater One within us overcomes anything that would contaminate, defile or attack.

### **Example of Overcoming Satan**

I was talking at the end of 1993 with a friend of mine from North England. He pastors a small congregation in Yorkshire. It had 80 people. I was talking to him on the telephone and asked, "How has your year been?"

He said, "Phil, I had the summer from hell."

"Really, what do you mean?"

"This summer thirty people left the church."

When thirty people leave an eighty member church, they are going to leave a hole. There are going to be problems. "Why did they leave?"

"Well, I asked them that. They said, 'I don't know.' 'What do you mean you don't know?' 'Well, we are confused. There is chaos, pressure. We can't take it anymore.' 'What is causing the pressure?' 'We don't know.' 'What is making you confused?' 'We don't know, but we can't take it anymore. We're gone.'"

It is bad enough when people are leaving the church and telling the pastor why they are leaving. It is even worse when they can't. So he called a time of prayer and fasting. On the second day of fasting and prayer, he was lying on the floor calling out to the Lord, "God whatever it is, restore Your glory to this place. Any areas that we need to repent, show us. If I need to repent, I will repent. If I need to get out of the way, I'll get out of the way. Bring your glory back into this situation."

He saw a vision. This was as if a movie screen had dropped down before him and he saw a film played upon the screen. He saw a house, a street name, a house number. The wall of the house opened up and inside was a group of people sitting with a pentagram painted upon the wall. There was a man standing, calling out the pastor's name and cursing it, calling out the name of the church and cursing it and everybody else joined in. God gave him a vision of a Satanic curse session.

He got up off the floor, got into his automobile, drove to the street and found the house which is exactly as he had seen in his vision. Instead of being the gentlemanly Englishman that he is and gently knocking on the door, he just walked up and kicked the door in! Booted the door in! It was hanging off of one hinge. There were wood splinters flying all over the place.

He stepped into the room. There were pentagrams here and there, a group of people gathered in a circle, a man leading them in curses. He stared at them and they stared at him. He finally fixed his gaze on the leader and said, "Sir, I have a Word from God for you. If you don't repent by this time tomorrow night, you are going to meet your Maker."

I said, "Bob, were you mad or was that God?"

He said, "I was mad, but I knew as soon as the words came out it was the Word of the Lord."

Six o'clock the next evening he got a phone call from a member of that group. The leader had dropped dead of a heart attack. Would he come over and sort them out? Most of that Satanic group is now in his fellowship, born again, filled with the Spirit. He's been casting out demons, doing healing and counseling such as he has never prepared for. Most of the people who left have come back. The chaos and confusion are gone.

## Prophetic Picture of Present World

Zechariah 1:18-21 "Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns. And I said to the angel who talked with me, 'What are these?' And he answered me, 'These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.' Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. And I said, 'What are these coming to do?' So he said, 'These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one could lift up his head; but the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter.'"

The four horns in Zechariah's time refer to the four gentile empires that arose in the centuries before and after his life: The Babylonian, the Medeo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, and the Roman Empire. But these empires speak prophetically of horns that God wants us to deal with today because the enemy has released them in the world today.

First of all let's look at horns. There is a prophetic symbolic understanding of horns in the Old Testament. The horns here speak of power, of authority, of strength. The beast speaks of a state, of an empire, of a world system. Let's identify four horns: Philosophical ideologies; false religions; materialism and hedonism; and nationalism and racism.