

The Complete Vision of the Age

Scripture Reading:

Hymn: 1151

- Prov. 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.
- 2 Pet 3:15~16 And count the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation, even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.
- Rev. 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

I. Needing the vision to serve the Lord:

- A. Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint—Prov. 29:18a.
- B. Not be disobedient to the heavenly vision—Acts 26:19b.

II. Serving God in the complete vision:

- A. Our vision must be from the first vision of Adam in Genesis all the way to the ultimate manifestation of the church in the New Jerusalem. This is the complete vision:
 - 1. From Adam to the apostle John, the divine revelations reach to the ultimate consummation.
 - 2. We serve God with the “Ching-Ming scroll picture.”
- B. Throughout the ages, many people served God in the first few scenes. However, we, in the ultimate scene, serve God with the former scenes.

III. Serving God according to the vision of the age:

- A. God only gives people one vision in each age to cover the need of the age.
 - 1. In Adam is seen God’s redemption.
 - 2. In Abel is seen God’s way of redemption—acceptance by God through the sacrifice.
 - 3. In Enosh is seen man’s need for God and man’s calling upon Him to enjoy God’s riches.
 - 4. In Enoch is seen one who was redeemed and who walked with God on the pathway of redemption.
 - 5. In Noah is seen one who walked with God and worked with God to meet the need of that generation.
 - 6. When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, there was no vision besides His leading.
 - 7. After the ascension of Lord Jesus, there was only one vision, the vision from Peter.
 - 8. During the ministry of Paul, there was only one vision, the vision which was received by Paul. Even Peter who was elder, also submitted to the vision of Paul—2 Peter 3:15-16.
- B. We must serve God according to the vision of the age, so that we will be acceptable to God.

IV. Serving in the one stream of the Holy Spirit:

- A. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this very day, is just one stream.
- B. If you receive the Lord’s mercy and grace, you will be brought into this remaining gushing and flowing stream today.
- C. The Holy Spirit leads us, we must follow this stream closely; our speaking and

spiritual sense should catch up to the stream of the Holy Spirit.

V. Following the person with the vision being serving in the vision:

- A. The examples of Aquila and Prisca.
- B. The case of Apollos.
- C. The examples of Timothy and Titus.

VI. Following closely the complete vision of this age:

- A. We are not following any person; we are following the one vision of this age.
- B. Following the consummated vision which inherited the past and is up-to-date with this age.

VII. The genuine one accord:

- A. We can be in one accord today, because there is only one revelation, one vision, and one sight.
- B. We only speak the same thing with one heart, one mouth, one voice, and one rhyme. This will become our morale, and impact.
- C. When the Lord's recovery has this power on the earth, the beautiful condition of propagation will be spontaneous.
- D. The present demand—one accord and faithful coordination.

Reference Books: *The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps*, Messages 1-3; *Truth Lessons*, Level 1, Vol. 1, main outline points from lessons 7-10; *The Divine Stream*; *The Collected Work of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 55.

Excerpts from the Ministry:**Serving God in the Complete Vision**

It has been nineteen centuries since the Apostle John finished writing Revelation. Throughout these nineteen hundred years, countless Christians have served God. The Jews also served God but they serve God according to the vision of the Old Testament. Some Christians serve God according to the vision in the four Gospels of the New Testament, which speak of the earthly ministry of Jesus. Some people serve God without any vision. To serve God in the vision, we need to arrive at the end of Paul's epistles, even arrive at the seven churches, the ages, the kingdom, the new heaven and new earth, and the ultimate consummation of the church—the New Jerusalem in Revelation. Therefore, we can simply say, if we would serve God, our vision must be complete from Genesis, the first vision of Adam, all the way to the ultimate consummation of the church, the New Jerusalem. This vision has not been completely revealed to us until today.

There is a “Ching-Ming scroll picture” in the Old Palace Museum in Taipei. It is a very long picture describing in detail the living in the Chinese culture. In order to see the complete view or “vision” of the living in the Chinese culture, one cannot merely look at the front part of the picture but must look at it from the beginning to the end. We also have a “Ching-Ming scroll picture” in serving God. It began from the tree of life that Adam saw in the Garden of Eden until the New Jerusalem in which also is the tree of life. The New Jerusalem is the last scene of the vision. After which, there is no more for us to see. (*The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps*, published in Chinese but not in English, pp. 52-53.)

We must see that in every age, God only gave one vision to man. In Adam is seen God's redemption. In Abel is seen God's way of redemption—acceptance by God through the sacrifice. In Enosh is seen man's need for God and man's calling upon Him to enjoy God's riches. In Enoch is seen one who was redeemed and who walked with God on the pathway of redemption. In Noah is seen one who walked with God and worked with God to meet the need of that generation.

In Abraham is seen God's calling, God's promise, the living by faith, and the living in fellowship with God. In Isaac is seen the inheriting of grace and the resting and enjoying. In Jacob is seen God's selection, the transformation in life, and the maturity in life. In Joseph is seen the reigning aspect of the maturity in life. In Moses are seen God's redemption, supply, expression, and leading. In Aaron are seen the priesthood and the offerings. In Joshua are seen the destruction of the enemies and the entering into rest. In the age of the judges are seen confusion and revival. In Samuel is seen the voluntarily consecrated Nazarite replacing the ordained priests, ending the age of the judges, and speaking for God as a prophet to bring in the age of the kingdom. (*Truth Lessons*, Level 1, Vol. 1, main outline points from lessons 7-10.)

Serving God According to the Vision of the Age

We must be clear that there is only one vision in one age and we must serve God according to the vision of that age. Let us use Noah as an example. According to the record of the Bible, it seemed that at that time, Noah's family—Noah, his wife, three sons, and three daughters-in-law—was not the only family who served God. In fact, do we believe that at that time, only these eight people served God and the rest of the people worshipped idols? We might not have thought about this matter. However, whether the rest of the people served God or not, one thing is sure, they did not participate in the building of the ark. Therefore, their service was not counted in God's view.

Some may ask, wasn't there any one else on the earth who feared God when the eight persons of Noah's family were busily building the ark? We can deduce from history that in Noah's age, the eight persons in Noah's family were not the only ones who served and worshipped God. At least the forefathers of China also served and worshipped God. The way they worshipped God was similar to the Old Testament in many aspects. Confucius, who was a man living approximately 500 B.C., said something about "offending heaven...." In the parable of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15, when the prodigal son returned home, he also said to his father, "I have sinned against heaven." People in the ancient time, both in the East and the West, always considered "heaven" as a symbol of God because whenever they lifted up their heads and saw the heaven, they thought of God. Therefore, many people in the ancient time sought after God, knew God, and served God according to their knowledge of God. However, we must see that although many people were serving God, only the service of the eight persons in Noah's family was according to the vision and is acceptable to God. (*The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps*, published in Chinese but not in English, pp. 9-10.)

Serving in the One Stream of the Holy Spirit

The One Stream

The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this very day, is just one stream. Wherever it goes, wherever it flows, it is not many streams, it is only one. Read the book of Acts and there you will see that there is one stream, one current. This stream started from Jerusalem and flowed to Antioch, and from Antioch it turned to Asia and was flowing there. Then one day the Lord wanted the stream to strike forth into Europe, to Macedonia, but the Apostle who was working in the flowing of the stream was not clear about it. Eventually, however, he became clear that the flowing was striking forth from Asia to Europe, and he had to go along with it. It is a familiar story. From Macedonia the stream went in its path to Corinth, to Rome, to Spain, and to all parts of Europe. History tells us that from Europe it flowed to the West, to America; and from the West it flowed to the East and to the South. In reading the history of the church we find that this flowing stream has never been stopped, and we notice that everywhere this stream flowed, it was just one. It was one in Jerusalem, one to Antioch, one to Asia, one to Europe, and one everywhere it has flowed. Please be clear that there have never been two streams. There is only one stream, and you have to keep yourself in this one stream. (*The Divine Stream*, p. 13.)

At this point I would like to offer a personal testimony on this matter. In 1933 I went from North China to Shanghai for the first time in order to visit Brother Watchman Nee. I stayed with him there for several months. When I was about to leave to return to my home city in North China, Brother Nee came to me and said: Brother Lee, we feel it is the Lord's mind that you move your family to Shanghai and stay with us for the Lord's work. Would you bring this matter to the Lord? When I went to the Lord with this matter, I received the light. The Lord showed me that in the book of Acts the current of the Lord's work, the stream of the Holy Spirit, is one. He showed me that in the Acts there was only one line on the map, starting from Jerusalem and running to Antioch, from there to Asia, and from there to Europe. I saw that there never have been two streams, but always one. I said to the Lord: Lord, I thank Thee. There can never be two streams of Your work in China. If there is something done for You or by You or through You in North China, it must first be that I go to Shanghai to be mingled together in the one stream, in order that out from there something will flow forth to North China. Thus there will be one stream. On the very next day Brother Nee came to see

me. I said to him: Brother, I am clear about this matter. I must do what you suggest. From this day I am working with you in Shanghai.

From that time, what a flowing there has been! I can never tell you how rich and how wonderful it is. It is all because I moved into the flowing of the stream at that very time. Oh, the light of the Scripture has flowed as a tide! The life, the power, the energy, and the authority have flowed into me. Wherever I have gone, I have not gone on my own. I have been just as a boat in the current; wherever the current has gone, I have been carried on. It has been so easy. It has not been my strength, my energy, or my endurance; it has been the flowing of the stream. From that time, the Lord has been gradually showing me the flowing of the life, the flowing of the work, the flowing of the testimony, and the flowing of the fellowship of the Body. (*The Divine Stream*, pp. 14-15.)

The Holy Spirit Leading Us, We Must Follow This Stream Closely

During the two thousand years of church history, the Spirit of God has been progressing all the time. Even after Acts 28, the Spirit of God is still going onward; He has never stopped. Acts has no ending. We are foolish if we think that the Holy Spirit has left the church. Actually, in every age God has always raised up some people. In every age the church has been progressing. From generation to generation, it is ever moving onward and ever progressing forward, even up to the present day.

Only those who walk according to God's heart are blessed with descendants. Michal bore no children (2 Sam. 6:23), yet Bath-sheba, the mother of Solomon, had Sons (12:24). A descendant is the continuation of the line of the Holy Spirit—this is what I call the flow of the Spirit. We have inherited all the grace from our forefathers and ancestors; we receive our spiritual heritage from them. Is God's way an advancing way among us today, or is He moving through somebody else? This is what I call the authority of the Holy Spirit. Once we fail, the Holy Spirit will express Himself through somebody else. The authority of the Holy Spirit is like the trunk of a tree; it grows undeterred. Wherever the seal of the Spirit is, there God's way is.

What if this line is broken? We should study church history to observe God's footprints. Such footprints can be detected in history and in the church. When we look back to Martin Luther, we can see many weaknesses in him, but during his time, Luther's work was the peak of the work of the Holy Spirit. Today we are the fruit of Luther's work. None of us has a life that is long enough to manipulate this line.

Throughout the ages, the church has been like stepping stones in a stream. The work of the Holy Spirit on us is to make us stepping stones through which He can move. This is our greatest glory. If He cannot secure a way through us, He will choose another stone to step on. If He cannot be released through us, we will suffer the greatest loss. The seal of the Holy Spirit may be at a certain place at present, but where it will be ten years from now we cannot tell. Each day the Holy Spirit is bypassing men and setting them aside, group by group. Many people seem to have lost their usefulness. Therefore, we have to be on the path of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit cannot accomplish anything through us, He must make a new start with somebody else. What a solemn matter this is!

We should always walk on the positive path. In the past twenty years, Brother T. Austin-Sparks has been concerned with the Body service. Some brought up this matter one hundred thirty years earlier, but there was no one walking on this path. The recovery of a certain truth is quite a different thing from actually walking on the path of that truth. It was not until the time of T. Austin-Sparks that this spiritual reality began to manifest itself. Now is the time for us to take the way of fully functioning in the Body service. Everything should be consecrated for the furtherance of the gospel. We attend school for the furtherance of the gospel, and we work for the furtherance of the gospel. The recovery of the Lord in the church is reflected in other areas as well. When the Lord has a move in the church, He makes a corresponding move in the world. We must reach the stage in which the whole Body is coordinating

together in the service and the stage in which everything is for the gospel. When the whole church is serving, the Lord's coming will be at hand. At that time not only will teaching be released but the Holy Spirit will be released as well. The church moves because the Holy Spirit moves first. As soon as the Holy Spirit moves, all will say "Amen" to His move. The Holy Spirit has moved on ahead of us, and we are following Him in this flow. Our words and our spiritual senses should all be up-to-date with the flow of the Spirit. (*The Collected Work of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 55, pp. 248-249.)

Following the Person with the Vision Being Serving in the Vision

We can see clearly from the revelation of the New Testament that when the Lord Jesus was on the earth, He was in the vision; there was no vision beside His leading. Other people were either in tradition or in knowledge. Gamaliel had much knowledge and understood well God's principles but he did not have the vision. His words were not in the vision but altogether words of knowledge. After the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, the ones in the vision were Peter and his coworkers. It does not mean that Peter had a vision, John, James, and other apostles also have a vision. There was only one vision, that was Peter's vision to become the vision for all those who followed him. When Paul was ministering, he obtained the vision from the heaven, the earth, and paradise (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Although Paul had many coworkers, beside what Paul saw, nobody else had seen another vision. They only had one vision, which was the vision Paul had received.

There Being Only One Vision in One Age

Concerning the matter of having only one vision in one age, there is a lot of debate among Christians. However, God's word clearly reveals that there is only one vision in one age. In Abel's time, Cain did not worship idols and build idol temples. He was offering sacrifices to God like Abel. However, Abel offered acceptable sacrifices to God according to the vision but Cain offered sacrifices outside of the vision. Therefore, if you were born in the age of Abel, you would follow Abel's way or else, you would be taking Cain's way outside of the vision. In the age of Enosh, his calling on the name of God was in the vision. Although there were others worshipping God with other ways, they were not worshipping in the vision. In the same way, in the age of Noah, there were not only eight persons worshipping God. There might have been eight hundred or even one thousand worshipping God. They did not follow the way of sin but were worshipping God but their worship was not in the vision. Only the eight persons in Noah's family, because they followed Noah in their service, became the ones serving in the vision. Because what Noah saw became what they saw.

It is the same principle in the New Testament. God's work in the New Testament is to produce and build the church. This vision was given to Paul. Therefore, when Paul began to minister, Peter's ministry was over. When Peter was old, he said in 2 Peter 3:15-16, "...even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, As also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." This shows that even the aged Peter submitted under Paul's vision confessing Paul's word is as precious as the Old Testament Scripture to be properly received by all the believers.

Because of this, whoever did not blend into Paul's vision was not mentioned again in the Bible. Such as Barnabas, who brought Paul into the service originally, but because he had a different opinion from Paul, the Bible did not mention his name again. Apollos was one who could speak and interpret the Bible. However, he replied to Paul in First Corinthians chapter 16 that it was not at all his desire to go to Corinth now, but that he will go when he has

opportunity. After these things, the Bible did not record anything concerning these ones any more. Barnabas was zealous in his service; Apollos was eloquent in speaking and interpreting the Bible; but God did not use them any more because they did not serve in the vision. This is a very serious matter. (*The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps*, published in Chinese but not in English, pp. 19-21.)

Following Closely the Complete Vision of this Age

Since we have the consummate vision of this age, we need to follow closely. We are not following any person but following a vision. It is a big mistake to say that we are following a certain person. We are following the vision of this age, which is the ultimately consummated vision of God. (*The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps*, published in Chinese but not in English, p. 54.)

I tell you a fact that, by the mercy of the Lord, He revealed to me the vision. Therefore, I admonish you not to merely follow me but follow me in receiving the Lord's mercy. See, inherit and continue the vision that was passed on to you by Brother Nee and the Lord's servants throughout the ages. This is truly the vision from the first scene with Adam until the last scene in the New Jerusalem. I have seen with my own eyes for fifty years that those who came into the Lord's recovery, remained for a while, and then left did not have a good ending because there is only one way. All spiritual matters are of oneness: one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one church, one Body, one testimony, one way, one flow, and one work. If you do not take this way, you will have no way to go on.

Following the Consummated Vision That Inherited the Past and Being Up-to-date with this Age

Therefore, you are not following a man but you are standing together with the Lord's ministry. You are following a vision, a vision that is up-to-date with the age and has inherited from the past to become the consummated vision. Since it is up-to-date with this age, it has also inherited from the past. If you are still standing in Acts, you have certainly inherited the past but you cannot say that you are up-to-date with this age. If we would consider the revelation of the Lord's recovery and look at the books published among us today, we can see that we have the complete vision beginning from the church, continuing with God's economy, and consummating in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. If you are in this vision then you are serving in this vision. If you are not in this vision, though you may teach and interpret the Bible like Apollos, visiting the churches like Barnabas, serving with godliness like James, and being the number one apostle like Peter, whatever you do would not be in the vision.

I believe that this light is clearly seen among us and none can argue. Because of this reason, I hope that the young brothers and sisters are also clear concerning this point so that you understand where we are and what we are doing as you begin to serve the Lord at your young age. This is not a personal matter but completely the Lord's ministry. He is bringing His vision to God's children from generation to generation. Therefore, whoever is in this vision is serving in God's vision. (*The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps*, published in Chinese but not in English, pp. 56-58.)

The Genuine One Accord

Today we can have one accord because we have only one vision and one view. We are all serving God in this vision that inherited all and is up-to-date and we all see things the same

way, speak the same thing, have one heart and one mouth, have the same sound and tone. This results in a strength that becomes our morale and our impact. This is our power. When the Lord's recovery has this power on earth, spontaneously there will be the beautiful condition of multiplication and increase. However, our condition today is not so high and has not arrived at the peak so that although we do not have big arguments and debates, we have small murmuring and reasonings resulting in a low morale among us. (*The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps*, published in Chinese but not in English, p. 60.)

Questions:

1. How should we serve God?
2. How do we serve God when we do not have the vision?
3. What would be the result of serving in such a way?