

A Heavenly Vision

Where there is no vision, the people perish.(PRO29:18a) Vision defines as a "sight" i.e., a dream, revelation, or oracle. *"Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging"*(MAR10:46) Bartimaeus was a poor blind man. For all his life without any visual contact with the environment/people, he was sitting there, by the road, begging. How great must be the desire to see! For sure, he must have heard about David and expected a Messiah from his generation. He also heard about the mighty things Jesus was performing. Really, how much he must have longed to be one of those that would meet Him. Bartimaeus heard the noise of the crowd which was with Jesus. People told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Bartimaeus then began to cry out and say 'Jesus, Son of David, help me'. Now the 'Son of David' is a name for the Messiah i.e. Christ. This shows the belief of Bartimaeus. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Even if he was rebuked by others, he cried out all the more "Jesus, have mercy upon me" The Lord stands still at the cry of those that call Him. Jesus stopped and called to Bartimaeus. Jesus asked Bartimaeus to come to him and wanted to hear his request. 'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked. Bartimaeus's answer was confident: 'Master, let me receive my sight.' Bartimaeus showed his trust. He knew that the Saviour could cure him. As a result of his persistence, Jesus healed him. He received his sight and followed Jesus in the way(MAR10:46-52) For the Lord, each and every soul is very valuable, regardless of color, race or position. He does not look at names and titles but at human hearts. Until people meet Him they are blind, and all that meet Him, receive their sight.(ACT26:18) Only the Lord can give "the light of life", what you so much needed. Only the meeting with Him can make a soul to receive its sight, and only His dwelling in a man's heart can make it alive and bright.(JOH1:9-13) Are you going to stay spiritual blind forever? If you don't cry to the Lord, your own soul will never receive spiritual sight, and you will never have a part in the eternal life. It is a sight in many ways more important than even our physical sight. The Bible calls it spiritual vision, a sight which goes beyond our physical capacity to see. The Scriptures recommend that we should have vision, knowledge and understanding. Seeing a vision empowers us. What about you? Do you have a vision? What about our church? We are all in effect born into darkness and need the light of God to bring us out of darkness and into light and truth. It seems that unless you start looking the right way - i.e. towards God and His word you don't have much chance of getting out of it. We have received the Spirit of God that we might know the things above that have been freely given to us.(1CO2:12,14)

When people lack vision, it likely means that they lack a sense of destiny, or direction. The word used for vision refers to a revelation from God. It's talking about God's vision, God's direction, God's guidance in our lives. In other words, it is God's word to us, a living word for today. This vision is a picture of a desired future. It is a picture that can be seen by faith of what is not yet, but of what can be or what God wants to be. But when we know there is a purpose in lives, we will begin to see portions of the future; we get a vision for lives. We will have a sense of direction and focus that allows us to see where we are going in life and what will be doing. Vision encompasses both God's plan and your decisions. As you seek the Lord and begin to seek out your destiny, two simultaneous events happen. You are discovering your destiny and as God leads you. Without a clear vision to direct us, we fail in the most miserable of ways, by missing what God has for us. We are reduced to lost opportunity, undisciplined lives going nowhere important. We are just wandering aimlessly through life, hoping that something good will happen but that it won't. We need a vision which will give us a purpose for our lives. It is an awareness of God in our feelings, motivations, and choices. It is the kind of direction which will enable us to find ourselves worth in helping to build the Kingdom of God. It is the kind of word which gives stability, guidance, joy and excitement. It is the kind of divine motivation which turns lukewarm, slothful saints into red-hot, living labors in the grand cause of turning the world upside down. Seeing the vision and acting on it can change our life, the life of the church, the lives of others. Pray that the spirit of truth will guide us into all truth. *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened*

Jesus said, *"For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind"*(JOH9:39) God is a God of order and purpose. Jesus came to earth to show us the Father and to provide the means of salvation for mankind. He reveals the power of Kingdom of God and the promise of its final victory. Part of that reflection was in the Lord's divine strategy in disciplining (training) men so that the ongoing work of His kingdom could continue through them. He called twelve disciples to Himself and fully invested in them. God's means of making His will known to His servants was through dreams and visions. In Rom 4 Paul refers to the promises given Abraham. These included the promise to be a blessing to the nations of the world. In the New Testament, believers are called heirs of Abraham(GAL3) This means we have inherited all God promised Abraham. This includes the calling to bless the nations of the world. We need to make disciple making of all nations and teach the ways of the Lord and of His kingdom. *and has made us to be a kingdom(a royal race), and priests unto God and his Father-to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever*

Heavenly Zion

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The psalm 48:1-3 begins of praise to God by declaring the Lord as great and most worthy of praise. But the greatness of the Lord is going to be praised in regards to Zion, the city of our God, his holy mountain. In verse 2 the psalmist declares that the holy mountain of God is beautiful in its loftiness. Zion is the joy of all the earth as God to rule over all the nations with a throne in Jerusalem. Further, Zion is compared to the utmost heights of the north. This is the city of the Great King. "God is in her citadels" The Lord's presence is in Zion. God dwells there. God has made himself the defender of Zion. God is the walls to Zion. God is the city's defense. The Lord has given victory to His people in protecting the city of God.(48:4-7) Since God was in Zion, Zion could not be conquered by any enemies that came against it. Zion is the city of the Lord of Hosts, which literally describes God as the Lord of armies. Great confidence and encouragement was to come to the inhabitants of Jerusalem with the knowledge of God being its defender. God establishes and secures Zion forever.(48:8) God's name and God's praise should reach to the ends of the earth because of the mighty works of God towards Zion. God's right hand is filled with righteousness. God has kept his promises to his people and has defended Jerusalem, as he declared he would, while the people remained obedient. The people are rejoicing for the judgments of God have come against the enemies of Zion and against the nations.(48:9-11) The psalm concludes with a walking tour of the city of God, the towers, ramparts, and citadels.(48:12-14) Then, advise what you have seen to the coming generations. Tell the generations how great God has made Jerusalem. Tell the future peoples how God made Zion powerful and unconquerable. "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls"(JOE2:32;3:17-21ACT2:17-21)

So how can one enter spiritually into Zion today ? Christ is the entrance to Zion. "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame"(1PE2:6) Christ is the foundation of Zion and those who put their trust in Christ are living stone in Zion who will be defended and never be put to shame.(ROM11:26-27) Jesus would become the doorway through which people can enter into a covenant with God. Jesus will not allow the ungodliness to exist. Nothing evil will enter in the city of God. By coming to Jesus we become part of the covenant made that the Christ would come and take away sins. Only those who would come to Jesus would receive the blessing of the God and entrance into the city of God. We can dwell in the city of God. We are in the presence of God. "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven"(HEB12:22-24;MAT21:1-5)

Heaven's Perspective

When Paul said he was caught up to the third heaven(2CO12:2), he was referring to the very dwelling place of God. *The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, ...and sees all mankind*(PSA102:19;33:13) Is the viewpoint from which you look important? Should everyone see things the same way, and what does the God's word say about the way we should see things? In the Bible, we find two ways to view life. One perspective is from the heavens and the other is from the earth. God looks from heaven, "from the place of His habitation"(PSA11:4;102:19) God always sees things from a heavenly, and in doing so, creates the solution before the problem ever arises. God has plan and He saw the end from the beginning. Is it possible to see things in the same way in which God sees them, from the heavens? Yes! According to Heb 3:6 and 1Pet 2:5, 4:17, we are the house of God. We have to be concerned true riches with thoughts of heaven and those things that are above, where Christ Jesus is seated at the right hand of God.(COL3:1-3) *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,*(PHI3:20;EPH2:6) If God says He views things from heaven, then we find in ourselves the kingdom of God. In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus proclaims that God's kingdom does not come with observation (or with an earthly perspective) rather, the kingdom is within you. From where does a king rule; judge, proclaim, declare, and view everything? From His kingdom! How can we take this principle and apply it to our lives today? In Jonah looks around and finds himself in a fishy situation. He says in verse Jon 2:4, *Then I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'* In Num 13:17-14:9, the difference in the reports of the spies was the perspective from which they saw the situation. The earth said, "there are giants in the land", while the heavens said, "we are well able to take the land" At one time, Jesus asked Peter for his perspective, "Who do men say that I am?" From the perspective of men, or the earth, Jesus was a prophet or a teacher. Peter replied, "Your are the Christ, the son of the living God"(MAT16:15) We must view everything from heavenly perspective to hear what God is saying. When we view things from the earth, our views are not necessarily wrong, they are simply views that understand life in a way that is less than what God says. *From the end of the earth will I cry to You, when my heart grows faint: lead me to the rock that is higher than I*(P61:1)

Biblical world view

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In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.(GEN1:1) It is not the world that God created we see today and of man who inhabits it. On the sixth day, God created the man in His own image.(GEN1:26-27) God created the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life.(G2:17) Man was placed on earth in the Eden as His representative. He was given dominion over the whole world to enforce God's claim to the earth. Man had dominion over all the plants and animals of the world. He has a spirit and mind which enables him to learn about and communicate with God(ISA43:7,21) The spirit of God came down and walked and talked with man in the beautiful garden in which he lived.(G3:8) God created a perfect environment. But something terrible happened to spoil this beautiful plan. In the Garden where Adam and Eve lived were two special trees. One tree was called the tree of life(G3:22). If Adam and Eve had eaten of the fruit of that tree, they could have lived forever and never died. But there was another tree in the garden. This tree was called the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil"(2:17) God forbid to eat the fruit of this tree. He did not want man to experience evil with all of its terrible results so He warned that eating the fruit of this tree would cause death. But man did not heed God's warning. God had an enemy named Satan came first to woman then to man in the Garden of Eden. He was disguised in the form of a serpent. He tempted them by making false promises. They yielded to the temptation, sinned against God, and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The results of this fall of man into sin changed the whole world. The plants and animals were no longer easy to control. Man had to struggle for dominion over them. Animals turned wild and fierce and the earth brought forth weeds and thistles. Terrible changes in weather came in the form of floods and similar disasters. All the evil in the world today--all the plagues, suffering, tragedies--are results of this first fall of man. Sin entered the world, and along with it, suffering. The punishment of death was brought on man, just as God had warned. All men will experience physical death until the end of time. But even worse, man was separated from God by sin. The image of God/Glory that was to be reflected in man was spoiled. Because of sin, man lost his relationship and communication with God. In this darkest moment of human history, God made a great promise. God said to Satan: *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* (GEN3:15) This was the first revelation of a special plan of God. It revealed that a battle would rage throughout the centuries between man and Satan, but God would eventually send Lord Jesus Christ to crush man's enemy and restore man to right relationship with God. Genesis 3:15 also reveals another important fact. The "bruising" and "crushing" refers to a great battle going on in the spirit world. It is a battle for the heart, mind, soul, and spirit of man. There is no neutral stand in this spiritual battle. All men are divided into two opposing sides. Jesus said: *He that is not with me is against me.*(LUK11:33) The conflict that rages in the spiritual world affects the natural world in which we live. Satan is at work in the spiritual world, we can actually see it in the natural world in evil deeds committed by men and nations. There is no neutral, we are either for Jesus or against Him. If we are for Him, we believe all that is taught in God's Word and act upon this knowledge. If we do not believe the Word of God and continue to live in our own selfish and sinful ways, we are against Him.

Having a Biblical world view means you see the world on the basis of what is revealed about it in the Bible. It is basic to Spiritual growth and development. As you view the world as God sees it, you begin to understand it from His perspective. *Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.*L24:45 First: *The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead.* This means it was necessary for Him to suffer to reconcile sinful man with a righteous God. When God looks at the world, He sees sinful mankind in need of a Savior. (ROM3:23) Through belief in Jesus and repentance from sin, man can be reconciled with God and receive the gift of eternal life. This is a key truth behind the message of the entire Bible. Second: *"That repentance and remission of sins should be preached"* in His name in all nations. As Jesus faced death on the cross, He said: *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.* Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.(JOH18:37) Through His death on the cross, Jesus proclaimed that the plan of God for reconciling the world was complete. Jesus said: *I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*(JOH17:4) Three days after His death, Jesus was resurrected. Jesus made several appearances to His followers after His resurrection and before His return to Heaven. Each time He met with them, He spoke to them of reaching the world with the Gospel message. He gave them a challenge. This mission assigned to followers by Jesus has known as the "Great Commission" This means true believers have an important responsibility: To preach repentance and remission of sins is called evangelizing or spreading the Gospel.(EZE3:18-) Millions of people yet without Christ. Hundreds of languages without God's Word. Hundreds of people groups without a Gospel witness among them. Why are all these people yet unreached with the Gospel? Where are the laborers? (ACT8:4) Look around your village or city with spiritual eyes! The Bible records: *they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the Word.*

The God of the Vision

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Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine for hearing the words of the Lord.(AM08:11-13) Men and women were staggering, wandering, and fainting. Why? They had no vision, but rather a famine of hearing the words of God. Notice their aimlessness, because of their lack of hearing the words of God. Many Christians wander and stagger around because they do not teach to the word of God. *And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.* (ISA3:1) Men were not listening to God in those days, and God did not speak very often.(LAM2:9) These were the days of one of the old prophets and his sons who were unfaithful to God. This "silence" is often a form of divine judgment, and we see the calling of little Samuel as an end to God's silence. Eli's eyesight has greatly deteriorated, so that his vision is seriously impaired(ISA4:15), he needs the help of a baby like Samuel. God gave them a prophet, *and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.*(1SAM19-21)

God spoke to Habakkuk and said, *Write the vision, and make it plain...*(HAB2:2,3) Writing down the vision will help to remember what God originally said. Thank God for His direction, and allow the vision to develop through prayer, fasting, and obedience. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* Visions that God has given to Apostles and prophets are now recorded in God's Word, are given for our profit, motivation, solution, for our learning and inner-strengthening (ROM 15:4). Joseph was given a vision for his life through two dreams. These dreams revealed that he was going to be in a place of leadership over many people including his own family. His family members rejected this and his brothers became so jealous that they plotted to kill him, and eventually sold him into slavery. Through Joseph's experiences in the pit, in slavery, in prison, and in problems, we see that when God says Yes, no one can say No! We learn that although our vision may be tested it will still be brought to pass. Moses received a vision from God at the burning bush. (EXO3:1-10) The extraordinary thing was that this bush should be "all aflame, yet it was not consumed" He became aware of the presence of the God of his ancestors, reluctantly left the safety of a comfortable, quiet life, and began a journey to lead the enslaved Israelites to freedom. However, getting Pharaoh to release the Israelites, and then taking the people of God through the wilderness was not an easy job truly tested his vision.

Elisha had the vision to know that there was available to him a heavenly host, ready and waiting." *When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha*"(IIKI 6:15) God's people, the people of Israel were surrounded by the enemy nation of Syria. There were many soldiers, horses and chariots of war. When Elisha's servant, Gehazi, saw the great forces for the enemy, he was afraid. Elisha's prayer was granted, and Gehazi saw the spiritual forces that were surrounding Israel. There was more than enough angelic protection for Elisha and his servant. In this example, God allowed Gehazi to see the spiritual vision with his natural eyes. The point it makes is that without spiritual vision, the people of God cannot see beyond the natural circumstances of life. Like Elisha's servant Gehazi, they are defeated by the powers of the enemy they see at work in the natural world around them. Their vision is focused on the problems of their lives. Without spiritual vision, they cannot see or understand the divine plan of God. We can not see with our physical eyes the spiritual realm. The spiritual elements of the vision are given for greater spiritual perceptions of God's Kingdom, of His protection about our lives by His angels of might - as needed and as we live for Him. Daniel received a remarkable vision from God that greatly concerned him, so he began to pray for greater understanding of it. *The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.*(DAN10:1) The angel proceeded to tell Daniel that his prayers had been heard 21 days earlier, but that the reason it took him so long to get there was because he had to fight his way past 'the prince of the Persian kingdom,' and he couldn't do so until Michael came to help him fight. In the presence of the angel, Daniel was astonished almost to the point of passing out, so 'the one who looked like a man' touched him and gave him strength. Then he explained the vision to him. Nehemiah was a Godly leader with a vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He received this vision from God during a time of prayer and fasting. He was a man that was able to do the most possible dream because of his dependency on God. The Book of Nehemiah reveals an accomplished vision through prayer, fasting, sacrifice, hard work, and overcoming difficulties. Opposition reached such a level that those rebuilding the wall worked with one hand and held their weapons with the other hand. Every one of them had their sword by their side. They refused to disobey the heavenly vision and the walls of Jerusalem stood as their testimony.

How then do I get a Vision?

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In the last days, God declares, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all mankind, and your young men shall see vision.(ACT2:17) Until you are born again you are blinded by sin. Through the salvation given you through the blood of Jesus, your basic blindness is healed. Then God starts to help you develop your spiritual vision. The process is a spiritual parallel of an actual incident in the ministry of Jesus:(MAR8:22-25) *And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.* Spiritual vision involves seeing beyond the natural world into the spiritual world. It is an understanding of the divine purpose of God and recognizing your part in His plan. Spiritual vision provides a clear image of what God wants you to do and then directs every step of your Christian life towards achieving that goal. In order to comprehend things that are spiritual, we must have the light of God's words, a lamp unto our feet. (PSA119:105,130) Prayer can lead to a vision. God often gives vision, godly insight in response to it.(ACT13:1-4)

God gives us vision. The process for vision combines prayer and reflection on our understanding. The first stage of vision forming helps us to "tune in", spending time with the Lord, getting used to His presence and His voice. God speaks to us in a number of ways: Our observation and or vision comes through information and meditating on God's Word.(JOS1:8) As we read the *logos* of God[revealed word of God], the Holy Spirit speaks to us the *rhema*[spoken word of God]of God. It is that glorious quickening of the word of God to our minds and hearts. The indwelling spirit of God is continually gives truths, visions, revelations concerning things proceeding from God. It is the leadership of the Spirit, to give us leadership and guidance and direction.

Abraham tried to bring forth his God-given vision through self-effort by the birth of Ishmael. He knew God wanted to make him a great nation and he thought an heir could not come through his wife, Sarah. So he did something about it and Ishmael was born. Was the fulfillment of the vision through Ishmael man made or God-made? Ishmael represents your plans and methods of trying to do God's will through natural abilities. But the heavenly vision, represented by Isaac, must be birthed by God. God is the source of spiritual vision. Scripture has no record of God speaking again to Abraham for thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael. Not until it was humanly impossible for Abraham to have a child did God again stir the vision within him. By then, self-effort had died. Then came the birth of a vision, for in the perfect timing of God Isaac was born. But with the birth of God's plan [Isaac], Ishmael [self-effort] must be cast out. It is time for your Isaac [God's plan] to be birthed in your spirit. In order for this to happen, Ishmael must be cast out. It is a painful experience to cast out self-effort, your plans, ambitions, tradition, and organizational programs. But God is saying to you as He did to Abraham, "Grieve not for Ishmael [self-effort], for in Isaac shall your seed be called" In Isaac the source of the vision was God. We are told in Isaiah 53:11 that God witnessed the travail of Jesus Christ and was satisfied. A vision was fulfilled that day on Calvary...a vision that had been promised since the fall of man into sin(GEN3:15) Through travail, the vision of redemption from sin became a reality. Travail is a painful experience, but it is only through travail that the vision can be birthed.(ISA66:8-9)

We need a vision of Jesus.

We want to see Jesus, we need a vision of all about Jesus, about lifting Him up, about Him being the Savior of the world, our go-between and advocate at the throne, our coming King. When He went to the Mount of Transfiguration, He took with Him Peter, James and John, *And He was transfigured before them and became resplendent with divine brightness. And His garments became dazzling white.*(MAR9:2) Joshua saw Him, when he stood at the walls of Jericho and wondered what plans should be followed to take that city, and he saw a man with sword in his hand, and he said to him, "Are you on our side or for the other side?" He said, "I am the captain of the host of the Lord." He is our Captain. He has the plan, the way and the truth that what we need is to see Jesus, have a vision of Him. Isaiah said:"*In the year that king Uziah died, I saw the Lord, I saw the Lord, high and lifted up. Uziah died, I saw the Lord, high and lifted up. I saw Him!*" In Heb 2:9 "*But we see Jesus*" talking about knowing Him in the heart and soul, loving Him, trying to be like Him, a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. Stephen, spirit-filled man saw Him. And though broken and bleeding and dying, he said, "I see Jesus" They stoned him to death. But the Bible tells us of Stephen, "*But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God*"(ACT7:55, 56) Zion in Heaven is the present dwelling of Jesus, and the angels in visible form. Heaven is where Jesus now waits until time for His return to earth to establish the Kingdom in its permanent, visible form. While He waits in Heaven, Jesus serves as an intercessor. He sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for believers on earth.(HEB7:25) We need to see Him and see Him high and lifted up. *You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.*(GAL3:1)

God's vision for Paul

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God's vision was revealed to Ananias. *The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. "for he(Paul) is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles"* Ananias is used to restore Saul's sight and he could see again.(ACT9:15-18) Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, was born Saul, a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. Saul the Pharisee, witnessed the stoning and death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and guarded the clothes of his executioners(ACT7:58). He then started persecuting the Christians, imprisoned many of them(ACT8:3) Now Paul is giving a testimony of how the Lord has worked in his life. He is on his way to Damascus and sees a great light. He explained to King Agrippa what he had an encounter with the risen Christ: *I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, flashing about me and those who were traveling with me. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks. Saul is blinded. Here Jesus coming to him and revealing Himself to Paul. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' Paul received his heavenly vision by asking, "Lord, what do you want me to do? Jesus says, I have appeared to you to appoint you as My servant and as My witness. This is the calling that we have. Then Jesus says, "I send you to the nations." That is the "mission". to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"(ACT26:13-19)*

God gave Paul spiritual vision for the purpose of making him a minister and a witness. It was part of what Moses and the Prophets foretold. *"that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles(ACT26:22-23)* The heavenly[spiritual] vision became the compelling force in Paul's life. He recognized that having this vision is not enough. Action must be taken to achieve the goals of the vision. A vision can remain "visionary." This means it never becomes a reality because you never act on it. When God gives a vision He also provides spiritual and practical strategies for fulfilling it. When God gave Paul a spiritual vision, He gave him specific things to do to in order to fulfill the vision. Paul surrenders to the grace and calling of Jesus and totally depended on God. In the time of trial, Paul remembered God's word of promise. And he (Paul) went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God.(ACT19:8)The Kingdom of God was the central focus of Paul's ministry. Preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.(ACT28:31) *If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel (1CO9:16)* What Paul is told in that heavenly vision is a perfect summary of what Jesus does and wants to do in every men in the world: Jesus opens their eyes to awareness of their sins and miserable condition; He enables them to turn from the darkness of their sinful state and the meaninglessness of the lives to God's blessed presence in their lives; by so doing, He saves them from the dominance of Satan, and He empowers them to live holy constructive and victorious lives; and, He forgives their sins and finally, He inducts them into the communion of the saints and the blessed fellowship of those who are saved by faith in Him.

This is God's vision, His salvation plan for all mankind - every human being in the world saved and included into the body of Jesus Christ! God has called the church and commissioned it to work primarily for the fulfillment of His heavenly vision for the world. The church is sent into the world to serve as an extension of Jesus Christ's preaching, teaching, forgiving, reconciling, liberating and healing ministry; "...to preach the gospel to the poor; to heal the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"(LUK4:18,19); "to seek and to save what was lost"(LUK19:10) "not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many"(MAR10:45) The church is given the commission to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"(MAT28:19) and demonstrates God's love. This is the mission of the church. God's method is one of sending. Out of love for us, the Father sent His own Son:(JOH3:16-17) Jesus has commissioned us to go forth with the Gospel. Every local Church should become a sending church, going forth in love to a dying world. Every church is surrounded by multitudes without God and without hope. This is our first and greatest challenge. Jesus left His followers with a great task. Through this process, new souls will be won and new fellowships will continue to be established. There are no closed nations, prayer can go to the ends of the earth. Prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit can penetrate every nation, regardless of closed borders or laws forbidding the spread of the Gospel. Pray for: -The growth and development of the Church all over the world. -God to raise up laborers for the harvest--pastors, prophets, evangelists, apostles, teachers, and called leaders--to fulfill the commission. The vision-the heavenly vision that came to Paul - has been offered also to us and our churches as a heavenly mission and a divine plan.

Spiritual Kingdom

- 7 -

All men live in a natural kingdom/Government of this world.(MAT4:8) They live in a city or village which is part of a nation. Man exists in two worlds: The natural world and the spiritual world. The natural world is that which can be seen, felt, touched or heard. It is physical and visible; you can see the people who are part of your environment. You can communicate with them. You can experience the sights, sounds, and smells around you. But there is another world in which you live. That world is a spiritual world. You cannot see it with your physical eyes, but it is just as real as the natural world. You see this division of natural and spiritual: *There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*(1CO15:40) All men have a natural body which lives in the natural world. But man is also a spiritual being(soul and spirit) is part of a spiritual world just as natural body is part of the natural world. The Bible speaks of the kingdoms of the world. The kingdoms of the world are presently under the control of Satan:(MAT4:8-9) In the future, all the kingdoms of the world will become kingdoms of God and He will rule over them.(REV11:15) The spiritual world is composed of two spiritual kingdoms, the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God. Every person alive is an occupant of one of these two kingdoms. The Kingdom of Satan consists of Satan, spiritual beings called demons and all men who live in sin and rebellion to God's Word. The Kingdom of God consists of God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, spiritual beings called angels and all men who live in righteous obedience to God's Word. The true Church is composed of all those who have become inhabitants of the Kingdom of God. At the present time in the natural world, the Kingdom of God exists individually within every man, who has made Jesus as King of their lives. In the future, there will be an actual visible God's Kingdom. Because the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom it must be understood with a spiritual mind: *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*(1CO2:14) The Kingdom of Satan is ruled by Satan. Satan was originally an angel created by God and was part of the Kingdom of God, but he tried to take over God's Kingdom.(ISA14:12-17; EZK28:12-19) Several angels joined Satan in this rebellion and they were all cast out of the Kingdom by God. They formed their own kingdom which is called the Kingdom of Satan. Evil spirits called demons are residents of the Kingdom of Satan. These spirits can enter, torment, control, and use humans who belong to Satan's kingdom. They motivate many evil acts done by men and women. Before the end of the world, Satan will use two special spiritual beings in his kingdom called the Antichrist and the False Prophet. They will be part of the final deceptive plan of Satan to overthrow the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is ruled by the Trinity of God which is composed of the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. There are angels which are spiritual beings who minister to man who are part of the Kingdom of God. Just as demons do the bidding of Satan in the world, angels do the will of God. Although angels and demons are spiritual beings, they reveal themselves visibly and verbally in the natural world on occasion. Demons possessing the bodies of men speak and act in evil ways through them. Jesus reveals that all men are either part of this Spiritual Kingdom. Jesus compared the world to a field. The good seed in the field were the children of the Kingdom of God. The bad seed, which resulted in the growth of tares (weeds) were the children of the wicked one: (MAT13:38) People enter the Kingdom of Satan through natural birth. The Bible teaches that all men are born in sin. This means that they have a basic sin nature or the "seed" of sin within. Their natural inclination is to do evil.PSA51:5;ROM3:23) The whole message of God's written Word, the Holy Bible, is the appeal to man to move from this evil Kingdom of Satan to the righteous Kingdom of God. Men must be reborn into the Kingdom of God through spiritual birth. Those who are born again change their citizenship to the Kingdom of God. They change their commitment from Satan to God. When they enter the Kingdom of God they must learn the principles which govern life in this Kingdom.

From the time of the rebellion of Satan, there has been spiritual warfare raging between the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God. This spiritual warfare being waged throughout the world is over the minds, souls and spirits of mankind. Satan is trying to keep men captive to sin in his kingdom. Through deceptive methods he entices men and women to partake of the temporary lusts of sinful living. He aims for the affections of the soul and spirit which rightfully belong to God: *The thief(Satan) cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I (Jesus) am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* (JOH10:10) This warfare in the spirit world will continue until the end of time.(LUK1:33) The Bible reveals that Jesus will return to earth in great power and glory to set up the visible Kingdom in its final form.(1TH4:13) Before Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom, the Gospel of the Kingdom must be extended throughout the nations of the world.(MAT24:14) In order to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, you must understand the Kingdom of God. We are told to seek first the Kingdom, to pray for it, and to preach it. Make the Kingdom of God your central purpose of life and ministry. It is a Kingdom which cannot be shaken by enemy forces.

Gospel of the Kingdom

- 8 -

The Kingdom of God is eternal.(PSA145:13) When God created the earth, it was His desire that His Heavenly Kingdom be extended to the world He had created. In the Garden of Eden He created the first man and woman who were to multiply and populate the earth. The creation of the world marked the preparation of the Kingdom of God to be inherited by man.(MAT25:34) He chose man as the instrument through which His Kingdom would be extended. But, Adam failed in this responsibility. Man lost the inheritance prepared for Him by God from the foundation of the world and Satan took control of the earth. But the promise of God to restore the Kingdom of God to man.(GEN3:15) From a woman's body the King, Jesus Christ, would come and crush the power of the enemy, Satan. Through His death man could be cleansed from sin, reborn into the Kingdom of God, obtain eternal life, and reclaim his rightful inheritance. After man failed, God chose a nation through which He could extend His Kingdom throughout the world. God raised up Abraham as the man from whom this nation would descend. He made many promises concerning the nation of Israel and their role in the extension of God's Kingdom throughout the world. But, Israel failed in the responsibility. They turned to heathen gods and accepted worldly standards instead of the Kingdom principles. *Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me.*(JER2:21;HOS10:1-3) Despite Israel's failure, God promised that His Kingdom would someday be restored in visible form and Israel would again be part of it. Promises were given to David.(IIS7:16)

Then God sent His Son, Jesus Christ. Where the first man, Adam, failed, the second man, Jesus, succeeded. He ushered in the Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus provided a way, through spiritual rebirth, that man could live in the Kingdom of God and that Kingdom exist within him. Jesus fulfilled this responsibility, as He made it the central purpose of His life and ministry. Jesus began to share the message of the Kingdom: *The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.*(MAR1:14-15;MAT4:17) The parables of Jesus about the Kingdom pictured it as seed which was sown, a mustard seed hidden in the ground, a hidden treasure, and a hidden pearl of great price. In all these forms, the Kingdom was present yet not visible.(JOH1:11-13) Jesus had given the parable of the nobleman who went to a far country and later returned to receive his kingdom. But Israel had not understood these Kingdom parables. Because Jesus did not immediately establish a visible Kingdom, a short time later the same people who had received Him as King rejected Him. They turned against Him and called for His death by crucifixion. Because of this rejection, Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God had been taken from Israel and given to a people who would produce the fruit of righteousness.(MAT21:43) By this, Jesus meant that the message of the Kingdom would be taken to the Gentile nations(all nations other than Israel) Now, God has chosen the Church. Those who receive and respond to the Gospel, as the corporate into body of Christ through which the Kingdom is to be extended.

The Church is the instrument through which the message or "Gospel" of the Kingdom is to be shared with the nations of the world. Through this, the eternal purpose of God will be accomplished:(EPH1:9-10) *And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.*(MAT16:19) Jesus spoke of His Church which would extend the message of the Kingdom throughout the world. *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*(16:18) In this passage Jesus revealed that Peter "a piece of rock" would be one of the spiritual foundation stones of the first church. Jesus then said of Himself, "upon this rock I will build my Church" indicating that the Church would derive its existence from Him. Jesus Himself was the cornerstone on which the structure of the Church was to be built. There would be many other lesser stones(people like Peter). These stones would be an important part of the Church. But Jesus then made two comments regarding this Church. First, He said that *"the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."* This implied that the Church would have enemies fighting it, but assured that the enemies would not overcome it. Second, Jesus promised to give the keys to His Kingdom to the Church. The authority Jesus was speaking of in this passage is a spiritual authority. He gave the Church spiritual keys to the doors of His Kingdom. The power and authority of the Church was to flow from Jesus. This power was released in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit was given to believers. The keys to the Kingdom were the power to bind and loose. To bind something means to put fetters or a bond on it. It is like closing and locking the door to a room. To loose something is to release or set it free. It is similar to opening the door to a room. The Church would have a position of authority. It would be the instrument through which the spiritual doors to the Kingdom would be opened to the nations of the world. Peter would be the first to use these keys to the Kingdom. He would open the door of ministry to the Gentile nations of the world. The Church would have the power to loose the spiritual forces of good and bind the spiritual forces of evil. In every difficulty faced by believers, binding and loosing would be the key to victory.

The keys to the Kingdom were given by Jesus to the Church. But how was entrance to be gained to the Kingdom of God? The story of Nicodemus, a religious leader at the time of Christ's ministry on earth tells. He came to Jesus desiring to gain access to the Kingdom of God and, by doing so, inherit eternal life. (JOH3:1-21; ICO15:50) Jesus told him: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Nicodemus was confused. He asked Jesus: *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* Jesus explained to Nicodemus that the "born-again" experience of which He spoke was not a physical birth. Because God's Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, you must be born into it through spiritual rebirth. You must change your position from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God. There is only way to gain access to the Kingdom of God is: Repenting from sin and spiritual rebirth. Through repenting and accepting Jesus Christ as Savior you are born into the Kingdom and become a Kingdom inhabitant. There is only one way to enter the Kingdom and that is through Jesus Christ. Now the door to the Kingdom is open. Jesus warned that you should enter the gate to eternal life now, because someday the entrance will be shut. (LUK13:24-25) In the time of God's judgment of the world, it will be too late. The door will be closed. Jesus told a series of parables in Luke 15:1-32. The parable of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep illustrates how God seeks to bring those who are spiritually lost into His Kingdom. The parable of the woman looking for a lost coin illustrates the diligence with which you should seek for those lost in sin to guide them to the Kingdom. The parable of the lost son illustrates the principle of repentance through which you can gain your rightful place as an heir of the Kingdom of God. It is through faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ that you enter the Kingdom of God: (JAM2:5) The Apostle Peter, speaks of spiritual qualities you should seek to develop in your life after you enter the Kingdom through faith: (IP1:5-11) *If you do not do this, you will soon forget God has cleansed you from sin and return to the old sinful lifestyle. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* (MAT7:21) The Bible speaks of the Kingdom being filled with good seed and tares resulting from bad seed: (MAT13:38-43) After accepting Jesus as Savior you must continue to do the will of God. When you enter the Kingdom of God it is like immigrating to a new country. You must learn a different culture. You must live by the principles of the new Kingdom into which you have entered. Becoming a resident of the Kingdom of God requires a change in thought and action patterns. You must develop a new lifestyle consistent with the patterns and principles of God's Kingdom. *encouraging, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.* (1TH2:13)

Before Jesus returned to Heaven, He said to His followers: *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.* (LUK22:29) The Kingdom God gave Jesus was passed on by Jesus to His followers and we are privileged to be part of this eternal Kingdom. (2PE1:11) Jesus left His followers with a responsibility of extending the Kingdom of God throughout the world. They were to be ambassadors of the Kingdom. An ambassador is a representative sent by one kingdom to represent and transact business in another. Paul said: *We are ambassadors for Christ.* (IIC5:20) We are the ambassadors sent by the King to represent and transact the business of the Kingdom of God in the kingdoms of the world. Our assignment as ambassadors of the Kingdom is a lifetime commitment. Once we have accepted this commission, we cannot look back: And Jesus said unto him, *No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.* (LUK9:62) As ambassadors, we are to be witnesses for the Kingdom of God. A witness is someone who can testify and present evidence of something experienced first hand. He is one who personally sees, observes, experiences, and produces proof of what he has experienced. Jesus said to His disciples: *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.* (JOH15:27) The witness of the ambassadors of the Kingdom was to extend throughout the earth: *But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* (ACT1:8) The message of the witnesses was to be as in LUK24:46-48

The message of the Kingdom is to be spread through both teaching and preaching: Jesus told His followers *As ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* (MAT10:7) The message of the Kingdom is not to be in words only. The demonstration of God's power is to accompany the verbal presentation of the Kingdom. This was evident in the example set by Jesus: *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* (MAT 9:35) And the people, when they knew it, followed Him: and He received them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. (LUK9:11) Jesus instructed His disciples to teach and preach the Kingdom, and to heal the sick. (LUK10:9;9:2) The demonstration of power ...miracles and healings...is the Kingdom of God in action. Paul said: *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.* (ICO2:4-5,4:20)

Then Shall the end come**- 10 -**

And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.(MAT24:14) Jesus spoke of the end of the world. What does this mean? The Church has to fulfill the commission of extending the Kingdom of God. The Gospel must be preached to all the world, but it must include the message of the Kingdom with the demonstration of the power of the King. Men must be informed of its existence and taught how to enter and live as Kingdom residents before Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom in its final appearance. God reveal us an outline of the major events by prophecy about how the world would end. The main prophecies about the future of the world are found in Daniel and Revelation. In ITH 4:13-18 gives the most detail which is called the rapture or caught up. Jesus Himself will return. For the trumpet will sound, there will be a resurrection of those who were faith in Christ when they died and those who are alive and remain, where each Christian receives glorified body(1CO15:51-52) There will be a rapture of saints will be taken from earth to meet Jesus in the air. There will be a reunion at the time of the Lord's return.

Before God's Throne

In Rev. chapter 14, John saw the 144000 standing with the Lamb(Christ). The man-child will be caught up to God and his throne. They sang a new song before God's throne. Jesus is the Lamb and mount Zion is the kingdom of heaven. The 144,000 are the people who had His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. They were spiritually sealed and entered the kingdom of heaven with glorified body. They are the firstfruits of the harvest, redeemed from the earth. The rest of the harvest is a great multitude; Men and women of all nations--of all tribes and tongues, of every people group--gathered before the throne.(REV7:9-)

The Tribulation

The tribulation is a seven-year period of time when God will finish His restoration of Israel and finalize His judgment of the wicked world.(ZEC13:8-9;ISA59:20-21;ROM11:1-36) *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written. "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.* The 7 year tribulation Period will be the fulfillment of the 70th week of Daniel. ch.9. It is during this period that the Antichrist(the Beast) will rule the world, leading up to the Battle of Armageddon at the end. Through spiritual wickedness in high places they will do signs, wonders, and deceive many. They will seek worship and condemn men with a special mark of ownership. *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be"*(MAT24:21) It is "The Day of the Lord"(ISA2:12; JOE1:15; ITH5:2) Isaiah described it as "the day of God's vengeance"(ISA34:8;63:1-6). In Jeremiah 30:7, it is described as the time of Jacob's trouble. Revelation calls it the great day of God's wrath and the hour of His judgment (REV6:17 In Rev 20:10 it is to destroy the kingdom of Satan from the earth. Satan and his evil forces will be defeated. At last, God's special plan will be fulfilled: *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.*(REV11:15) God's purpose fulfilled: Remember the special purpose of God! *Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him*(EPH1:9-10)

The Millennium

At the end of seven year period, Jesus will return with His saints and establish His thousand-year Kingdom of peace and justice.(ZEC14:9;DAN7:14) Satan will be bond during this time. Messiah has come as the Son of Joseph(ISA53) He died and suffered at the hands of His own brothers so that we may go free. Soon the world will see Messiah the Son of David(ZEC9:10) His kingdom will be established and His reign shall be glorious! Since the days of Adam and Eve, God has promised to redeem the earth from the curse of sin and to establish His personal reign upon the earth. The Bible reveals that Jesus will return to earth in great power and glory. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed again for a short time, and he will again influence men to rebel against God, and attempt to war against His people again at Jerusalem. Fire from heaven destroys them and Satan is cast into the lake of fire forever. Those who have died rejecting God and His Son are then raised from the dead, judged before the great white throne judgment and they will be condemned to eternity in Hell.

The New Heaven and New Earth

Jesus promised: *I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*(JOH14:2-3) After the Millenium and Little Season the entire earth and heavens had vanished for eternity(2PE3:10,13) *Then I saw a new sky(heaven) and a new earth,for the former sky and the former earth had passed away, and I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.*(REV21:1,2) Jesus hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.(1CO15:24-28) It will be an eternity of blessing and eternally a time of enjoyment of the presence of the Lord. There will be no more day or night, no more death, or sin, or sorrow, or tears. As we look for a new heaven and new earth the home of righteousness according to His promise.