

Visions and Revelations

Message 9: The Apostles Peter, Paul, and John

Note: This is a lightly edited transcript meant to aid saints in personal and small group fellowship and pursuing.

Dear brothers, by the Lord's mercy we are coming to the ninth message. We will begin to cover visions and revelations in the New Testament, also known as the Age of Grace or the Age of the Spirit. In the New Testament, everything is very different compared with how God operated in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament everything was based on miracles. God did everything through the principle of carrying out miracles. Just look at the five examples we covered in the past weeks: Joseph – a miracle. Zechariah – a miracle. Mary – a miracle of miracles. The shepherds – a miracle. Then the wise men – a miracle. You can see that in the Old Testament, God liked to appear to men, speak to men, and ask men to carry out what He desired all in the principle of miracles.

Now we come to the New Testament. Miracles are still here because everything God does is still somewhat in the principal of miracles. Some things become common to us though and we don't consider them miracles. Actually, they are still miracles. How are you able to you grow? How are you able to develop? These are miracles. But it become a law so we take as something common. In the New Testament, miracles are still there but miracles become so common as every Christian experiences them; for example, getting saved – that's a miracle. Every Christian sees Christ as the Savior – that's a revelation. Every Christian realizes they are a sinner and they need the Lord – that's a vision, a revelation. So you can see that the whole New Testament age comes into being because of Christ's resurrection, Christ's ascension, Christ's life dispensing, the Holy Spirit's work, and the Spirit's unveiling to man of different things concerning God Himself, concerning us, and concerning what God desires. In the New Testament Age, there are still miracles when we come to visions and revelations, but they're not that stressed. If it wasn't for the Apostle Paul's experience, we can almost say they are of no importance. But anyway, it's still there. Because of this, all the miracles are related to the will of God. God in the New Testament will give you a revelation, for example, you being saved. Now, you are not saved because you need salvation, that's only one part. You're saved because God desired you to be saved to be a precious stone for the building up God's spiritual house. You see, everything God does is with the will of God in view. You shouldn't say, "I have a vision, I have a revelation, and in turn, end up with a vision, end up with a revelation." No. you should say that every revelation, every vision God gives to you relates to the will of God. This is number 1.

Point b) the center of any vision is the revelation of Christ. Let me ask you, when you got saved, wasn't Christ the first revelation that you received? Isn't this the same with all Christians? You had a revelation, you saw that you were a sinner and eventually you received Christ – you took

in Christ, you received Christ as your Savior, you began to be a person of Christ, and even a person with Christ as the life abiding in you. You were no longer just a man anymore. You became a God-man, a Christian.

Brothers, if you have this clear view, you'll be saved from many unnecessary things. People easily get caught with miracles and marvelous things that happen. Brothers, no. The Lord will only ask one question: will this bring you to Christ?

More than that, secondly, when you have visions and revelations, you will be somewhat elevated or unveiled to the matter of truth. Let me ask you, you were just a sinner, a common sinner. How could you believe in Jesus? How could you even know that the blood of Jesus Christ would cleanse you from all your sins? How? You had a vision, you had revelations. With these visions and revelations, now you can say, I know Christ, I know truth. What is the truth? If I believe in Jesus Christ I will be saved. What is the truth? The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all my sins. What is the truth? I'm born again, I have new life, I have new living, and I am part of the Body of Christ. All these are revelations. This vision with revelations leads you to all these riches of truth. Eventually, they will lead you to a living. The more vision you have, the more revelation you will have, and the more you can be one with Christ. You know brothers, this is marvelous. In the New Testament we have visions and revelations not always through miracles, but in life, in Christ, in loving the Lord, and by seeing Christ. Eventually, we will see something that will lead us to Christ. This is marvelous.

Let me come back to you again. Brothers, without vision, a man will perish. We need to have a vision. Now in the New Testament, we even more so need to have a new vision. The basic vision that we all have, that every Christian has, that we all begin our Christian life with is: a vision of Jesus' death, of Jesus' resurrection, of Jesus shedding His blood for you; a vision that I am a sinner. In this vision, a lot of revelations came in to tell you all kind of things. So you had to confess sins upon sins, and as you confessed, you wept and you cried. You called on the name of the Lord, you received Him as your Savior, and you enjoyed the joyfulness in your spirit. This was the first vision and revelation that every Christian should have. Afterwards, your life should be a life of continuation, a multiplication of visions and revelations.

It's very interesting. You know, for instance you have the Apostle Paul who saw a vision miraculously. The Lord just appeared to him and spoke to him, "Why do you persecute Me?" And he asked, "Who are You Lord and what do You want me to do?" This is one kind of vision.

Peter had another kind of vision. He saw the vision but it took his whole life to realize how marvelous that vision was. Third is the Apostle John. We don't even know which incidents it was through, or after which times you could say he clearly had the vision. But eventually, there was the totality of all the visions in his writing when he talked about Christ. In his writing, he talks about Christ's work, how the Lord is walking in the midst of the churches, and in Revelation, what happened through the ages and finally concludes in the Kingdom feast which leads into the New Jerusalem. Brother, this is marvelous. So, see these three cases. One is like a

bomb. “POW! I see something.” One is like, “I saw something but it’s not clear”. One is, “I don’t even seemingly see anything, but for some reason I keep on seeing it. I keep on seeing it.”

Before I come to these three persons, I want to use 5 minutes to tell you there are four kinds of Christians. One kind is: I see, but I don’t do. One kind is: I’m in it, but I don’t see. One kind is: I see with the vision, and therefore I do it smoothly and easily. The last kind: I never even see the vision, but I’m in such the reality, and eventually I put it together, Oh, what a great vision!

I would like to give you an illustration. For instance, many people desire to go to Europe. Europe is very attractive with its different cultures and civilizations. So we have four cases mentioned before. When I was young, I saw a picture of Europe. I was very attracted by the culture of Athens, by the military and the bureaucracy built up by the Romans. Eventually, I became very attracted by the wise operation of the British and the romantic life of Paris. These are all parts of the rich human culture there. I see it, so I can say, I know Europe, I understand Europe. Have I ever been there? No, I have never been Europe. This is like most Christians. They can say I see Christ, I see the marvelousness of Christ, I see Christ is everything, but I never pay a price to have the reality.

A second kind is, I live in Rome, or I live in Paris – I live in the Chinatown in Paris or I live in the American town in Paris. I have lived in France for many years now but I don’t speak French because the post office speaks Chinese or English. The grocery store speaks Chinese or English. Eventually, I’m in the riches of Europe, but I’m never able to obtain the fullness of all the riches. I eat French bread, but I don’t understand the culture of it. I may eat very good famous French food but I don’t understand what makes it that marvelous. That means, I have something of Christ, I make the meetings, I read the Bible, I sing hymns, I enjoy the Lord, but I’m never able to come out of what I’m in and come into what God desires me to be in. I’m limited, I’m confined.

The third kind is, I see a vision and I pay a price for it. I see a vision of Europe and I pay a price to go to Europe. Because I have a vision, I know to go to London first, then to Paris, then to Rome, and then to Athens. Now I know the four special characteristics of Europe culture. Of course this is a limited experience of Europe, but at least I know four very different cities, all of which experienced extremely high success. I have a picture, so when I go it’s very easy. Oh, this is London. Oh, this is Paris. Because I see the picture, I pay a price for what I see. What does this look like for Christians? I see Christ with His unsearchable riches and then I jump into them, I pursue these riches. You want to talk about salvation or redemption? Oh, marvelous, I’m in that. Salvation? Oh marvelous, my whole life is in that. The bountiful rich supply of the Spirit? I’m in that daily! The Word of God which makes you wise and which gives you life? Oh I’m in that. I’m in the Word of God. Brothers, you see, not only I have a vision, but I’m really in this vision. The vision has become my reality and my substance, and therefore I can grow and develop well.

The fourth kind says, I never saw a vision, but I have been in London for many years. I was in Paris for some time. I was in Rome, I was in Athens. I have traveled to these cities and I

understand their culture. Eventually, I never see a vision, but the vision becomes a part of me. I didn't see a picture, but the picture becomes my being. If you talk about Europe, I know it so well because I invested myself there; I lived in those places.

Now, brother, what kind of Christian are you? Are you number one? Praise the Lord! Something so marvelous! After the meeting you go home and sleep. Or are you second one? I go to church meetings every Lord's Day. I go to listen to the messages. How about the riches of the Body of Christ? That's not my concern. I'm happy with a meeting hall. I'm happy with a brother who preaches. I'm happy with a brother who makes the food. I'm happy to have and enjoy such a sweet time each Lord's Day morning. Brother, this is just like if you stay in Paris, but in the Chinatown of Paris, or the American town of Paris. You never even really know Paris. The third kind is, I fight. I see something and therefore, I fight based on what I see! That's the Apostle Paul. I pay a price to gain what I see. If I see the heavenly Christ, I will pay any price to fully gain this heavenly Christ. The fourth kind is, I'm not sure I'm that excited. But I love the Lord. I want to love the Lord. I want to love the riches of the Lord. I want to enjoy the riches of Lord, I want abide in the riches of the Lord. I want the riches of Christ, the sweetness of Christ, the omnipresence of Christ, and the odor of Christ. Christ Himself has become my everything. I tell the Lord, "Lord without you, I cannot even live! I cannot live properly, healthily. I must have you, your presence, your word, your leading, your operation, and even have you with me all the time." Eventually, what? I have a very clear vision. Because I abide in the riches, eventually the riches, like puzzle pieces coming together, produce a beautiful picture.

So brother, before I come to the real thing, consider these four kinds of living on this earth. Don't say, "I saw something," yet go have your own life. Don't say that "the church life's only a part of me. The things related to the Lord are only a part of me." No. You never saw something high. You don't have visions. You don't have revelations. If you did see something high, you should say, "Praise the Lord, I see something." That is very good. Then you can go easily. You know first stop is London. You don't go to Rome, then fly to London, then go back to Athens, then come to Paris. That will mess the whole thing up. You will have a clear picture of how to go step by step in following Christ. Then finally, I like the last one. I'm not Paul. I don't see such a big thing, but I just want to love the Lord. Just like, just I love to be in Europe. I would like to be in London. I would like to be in Paris. I would like to be in Rome. I would like to be in Athens. Eventually, do you realize, these four major pillars (four cities) constitute, according my view, the European culture, and I becomes one who loves these cities, one who loves to enjoy these cities. For us, I love Christ. I love his redemption. I love His salvation. I love His supply. I love that He can become everything to me. I love to live in Him. I love to walk with Him. I love to be one with Him. I love to even mingle with Him, even incorporate with Him. I love to be so much one with this Christ, and eventually I will have a clear vision.

If you allow me to testify, this is just like me. You say, “Do you have a great vision?” No. “You see something marvelous?” No. But sixty-some years ago, I began to love Him. I have loved Him all these sixty-some years, and at the end something has become so clear to me. I see a very clear vision of who God is, what God desires, how God operates, how God moves. I have a clear vision according to my limited experience. Oh, praise the Lord, I say, “You are so marvelous.”

Now we come to three people: Paul, Peter, and John. These three apostles are the examples of three people who really received the heavenly visions. The first one is the apostle Paul. Do you know why God had to be so miraculous to him? Because he was a Jew. He was one hundred percent in Jewish religion. He was a Pharisee--a *top* Pharisee. He followed the law to the utmost. He said, according to the law, I'm not condemned (Phil. 3:6). Because he was so much in the law, God had to say, “If that is the case, I have to do something extraordinary. I will appear to you in the heavens and I will ask you, ‘Why do you persecute me?’ And I will tell you that I am Jesus, the one you persecuted. And I will tell you, ‘Now, stand up. Stand up, be strong as a called one. You shall be my ministry. You shall fulfill my ministry. You shall be a witness. I will tell you what to do and I will send you out.’”

Let me read the verses to you: Jesus said, “It's hard for you to kick against the goad” (Acts 26:14). So Paul says, “Who are you Lord?” And the Lord answered, “I am Jesus, whom you have persecuted. Rise! Stand on your feet”--this means be strong (vv. 15-16a). As a Jesus follower, rise, stand on your feet. Don't be a coward. “Stand on your feet. I have appeared to you for this purpose”--I have a purpose for you--“To make you a minister and a witness, both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will unveil to you” (vv. 16b). You see me now. You have to see a lot more. I like this statement. I see Christ. But there is a lot more Christ I have to see. I see Christ so clearly now. My conversation with Christ is so heavenly, but even at that Christ says, “Much more!” Eventually he said, “I will send you out to open people's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sin and become an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” There are five things: Open their eyes, darkness to light, power of Satan to God, receive forgiveness of sin, and finally, do you know that? Paul, I did not just appear to you to work and to preach gospel; I want to have a marvelous inheritance. I want to get a marvelous inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. Paul eventually testified. Oh King Agrippa. I therefore, was not disobedient to my vision. This vision controls his life. He was so clear. His commitment was so clear. So he knows, from now on, I'm for Christ. From now on, I'm for souls. From now on, I'm for the church. From now on, I'm for the testimony of God. Who am I? I'm a minister. I'm a witness. Marvelous.

Then how about Peter? Peter is very different. In the very beginning, he is sort of unclear. He saw something, and I think he was happy. His brother, Andrew, came to him saying, “We saw the Messiah.” Peter, of course, was shocked. “You mean, the one we have been waiting for has

finally come? You saw the Messiah? Who is he?" So he brought him to Jesus and Jesus was very nice to him. Jesus said, "Oh, you are Simon, right? Simon, your name shall be called Cephas." Cephas means a stone, but a particular kind of stone. A stone which has value. A stone which stands for something. "You will be called Cephas." He saw Jesus, he somewhat knew He's, the Messiah. And he realized his life should be related to this man. You know what happened? He escaped. He went home to be with his family.

Then, after a period of time, the Lord Jesus came to visit him. And while visiting him, number one, he healed his mother-in-law. I think that could have been a sickness for quite a long time. So once that miracle's done, people crowd in, wanting to see what's happened. Then the Lord Jesus has to get in the boat, and standing on the boat gives a message to them all. I think Peter began to see something. It's not just someone who changed my name. This someone has a healing power. Then he listened to his ministering, and saw this is one who can really minister to so many people and meet their needs. And after the whole thing, the Lord says, "Take the boat to the deep. Let's get some fish." So eventually he got so many fish, you know what happened? He really sees. He was not clear at all, but now he's clear. So he said, "Lord"--do you know what Lord means? It means "You are my master." "Lord, lord," but he didn't say, "I'm going to follow you." He said, "Lord, get away from me. You are my Lord, but tell you honestly, I'm totally disqualified. Look how much of an escapee I am. After I saw you before. I ran away, and you had to come to me. Now that you've done something, now I see you much more now. You're not just changing my name. You are the healing one. You are the ministering one. Actually, you do miracles to cause the fish to be caught in such a marvelous way. Lord, now depart from me. Why? I'm a sinner." Now he sees Christ. Now he sees himself. He has a vision. A revelation. The vision and revelation is related to Christ. Christ becomes the Lord. It is also related to how he's not qualified: "I'm not qualified. Depart from me." The Lord's answer is interesting: "From now on you will not get fish. From now on you will get men. Look, in my presence, how much fish you got. Look, in your coming days how many men you will get." He saw a vision. Now, I tell you, his life is a continuation of these kinds of visions and revelations. Then he sees more. Then he sees more. Then he sees more. At the end of his life it is so marvelous. He wrote Second Peter. He said "Let me tell you, brothers: I had a view. I saw the process. I saw what happened. I viewed all the happenings. I viewed them with my Lord. Do you know what I see? I see a glorious image; I see a glorious person sitting right in the midst of a glorious circumference--everything that's surrounding Him is glory."

This very simple statement points out two things. Firstly, God didn't do anything without his glory in view. He does everything with the desire to see people that begin to see what a glorious God He is. Secondly, God does everything with His Son in view. The glory eventually becomes His Son. Focused. Concentrated. The glory even becomes a person, His Son. His son becomes an image of glory. You just think about this improper illustration: you go to a golden palace. Everything is golden and glorious. Today, you do this as a tourist. You walk in, but you find out

nobody's there. You have the feeling, how empty is this glorious thing? There is all this gold, all these artistic designs, all of this marvelous building--such a glorious building, but who is the figure inside? But if you think back 100 years ago, then right in the middle was the emperor. There's a glory, but that is temporary glory. Actually it is a stupid guy there to be a sort of glory. But you see Christ. Peter says, "I couldn't tell you what my life is. My life is just saturated, glory! At the end of my life, I see a glorious circumference. Everything's glory and surrounded by glory. But in the middle, there is an image. There is a man. There is a man he is not *in* the glory, but who himself *is the constitution of* glory." Wow, what a vision this is! What a revelation this is! Peter's at the end of his life yet His word is, "I don't have to talk about myself too much. I'm too shameful. I'm weak. I'm the weakest among the weak. I'm the one who is a failure all the time. There is nothing I can boast. But I follow this Lord. This marvelous Lord. Let me tell you, at the end I consider all what I've been through. I consider what I have seen before God and I see, wow, there's a glorious man. Not a man *in* the glory, but a man *of* glory. A man who *is* the glory. There is a glorious figure, a glorious man, a glorious God-man, right in the midst of all the glories."

I am short of utterance, and you are short of time. If we could spend one hour, I think we could very happily enjoy such a marvelous thing: a man of glory, a man constituted with glory. A man who is glory. Right in the midst of all the glories surrounding Him. What do you see? GLORY! What did you enjoy? GLORY! Wow, what a vision. What a revelation. Eventually, Peter, from a person who was not clear at all, ends up with what a marvelous testimony.

The third person is the apostle John. I think that when he was very young he saw something. He saw a vision because he sees his cousin (Jesus) and he's also related to John the Baptist so when he was very young he was considering, "What should my life be? I know the Messiah is coming. I know something great has happened." So he went to John the Baptist. Then, you know he heard the voice from heaven saying "this is my son in whom I'm well pleased," but he never talked about it. He didn't talk about it. Then when John the Baptist introduced him to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," He doesn't even talk about that. He is very simple. Yeah, yeah, all these are marvelous. Hallelujah, I see a lot. But let me tell you no matter how much I see there's no way to compare with the fact, I just love Jesus. It's not a matter of how much I see. It's a matter of how much I love him. I love Jesus. I will not depart from Jesus. I will be with Jesus. I will care for Jesus' well being. I will care for Jesus' needs. I'll care for whatever Jesus has. I am with Jesus. I'm a lover of Jesus. I can be used as the apostle, but I love Jesus. I can be put aside just to care for the mother of Jesus, but I'm of Jesus.

You know, loving Jesus became everything to John. I love Jesus. I give myself to Jesus. I'm for Jesus. I'm following Jesus. Brother, I wish you can be the kind of brother who can say, "A vision like Paul, oh that's too far. A vision like Peter, I wish everybody could have that. But I'd surely

like to be John. I don't know that much, but I just know: I love Jesus. I love, give my life, and give my person to Jesus.”

Eventually, after John was an operating apostle and became a caretaker for Jesus' mother, then eventually, he went to Ephesus. In Ephesus, he began to write books. How did he write his gospel and epistles? "In the beginning was the word. The word was with God. The word was God" (John 1:1) "The word became flesh. Tabernacled among us" (John 1:14). Isn't that a vision? Isn't that a revelation? It shows he has a very clear revelation, but he doesn't talk about it. When he writes his epistles it just comes out automatically. Then come to the book of the epistle of John. "That is which is from the beginning, which we have seen, which our ear has heard, our eyes have seen, our hands have touched, we have touched, and eventually our hands handled. Who is he? The word of life" (1 John 1:1). He didn't talk about a vision, but talked about Jesus. "Oh yeah, I heard Him. Oh yeah, I've seen Him. Oh yeah I've touched Him. What a marvelous Jesus. Yeah, our hands have handled Him. You know who He is? He is the living Word of life." Isn't John a person of revelation? But revelation didn't come with revelation. Revelation came from loving Christ. I just love the Lord. Because of this, I become a person of visions. I do have something. I do see something, but for some reason, I don't stress on that. I stress that I must have Jesus every day.

At the end, do you know who got the biggest? Who is the biggest prophet? John. Who has the biggest vision? John. John saw the vision of seven local churches. John saw the vision of this Jesus walk among the seven local churches. Then John saw, testified about, the ages. I saw these horses, these horses, these horses. He testified about the ages. Eventually he said about the overcomers. Eventually he said about the wedding feast. Eventually he said, I saw New Jerusalem. What a man of vision! You have Paul who started with a vision. You have Peter who grew in the vision. Then, you have John and he tells you, yes Paul's vision will become mine, but much richer, much more full. How? I'm just like Peter. Defeated many times. My nickname is Son of Thunder. I always get mad at people. Maybe sometimes I even get mad at Jesus Christ. I'm just a terrible person, but I tell you, I can't believe loving Jesus is so precious. I just love Jesus. If the Lord would give me a vision like Paul, hallelujah. If the Lord would give me some vision like he gave to Peter, then my word is," Lord please advance it. Make it richer. Make it fuller, until I can see there is an image of glory, a person of glory, in the midst of all the glory." And more than that, can we say "Lord, how much we desire to be John. To just love you. To just have you. By loving you, having you, eventually, Lord Jesus, I have the greatest revelation. The revelation from the present age, the age of grace, and churches, and all what God is doing, all the way to the kingdom. All the way to New Jerusalem." May the Lord have mercy to us. We tell the Lord, "Give me a vision. If I'm not clear, advance the vision. If I'm not clear at all, then please let me love you. Let me love you so much that eventually the great vision can come out from my life of loving you." May the Lord have mercy.