

A New Perspective

The Lord gave me a thought called “The New Perspective,” and that is what I will be sharing on this morning.

Let’s pray:

Lord, we are so grateful to be here this morning, just to be with You together. This is a special privilege and blessing. Now Lord, we ask as we look to Thee for this upcoming conference and for this ministry this morning that You will bless and anoint it. And I do stand in the prayers of the saints for this time this morning. Lord Jesus, that Your word might be fruitful in our hearts and be an encouragement to us as we prepare for this next week. We ask You, Lord Jesus, to just cover us all this morning. Open our ears, open our hearts, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Preparing Our Hearts to Receive the Word of God

I know that we are going to be busy about many things, but our brother Fromke has told us this saying that everybody knows, “We need to keep the main thing the main thing.” So as we are preparing and getting ready, we need to remember that the Lord wants us to keep the main thing.

What is the main thing, particularly for this week coming up and getting ready to go to the conference? It is that the Lord might really prepare our hearts and minds to receive the Word of God. I have said this before, but I feel like I need to say it again this morning.

Our hearts tend to get crusty. You all will remember the story about the farmer’s field. Over the winter the soil becomes crusty, and it is not able to receive the seed, and the water just run off it when it rains. So it is important that the fallow ground, the crusty heart in our lives be broken up, and plowed. So may the Lord do that work in our hearts this week, to plow it up a little bit so that it might receive the seed of His Word, that it might be even watered as we are at the conference and bring fruit into all of our lives. It is very important to have a prepared heart. So I have a few words this morning that hopefully will encourage us.

I was really touched this morning by our brother’s opening, and at the end he said something that really struck me in relation to our hearts. He said, “Lord, I thank You for the privilege of sharing this morning.” Now as we go into this conference many of us will be serving in various ways. I said, “Lord, what is a right heart for serving at the conference?” A right heart is when we consider our service and see it as a privilege and not as a duty. If it becomes a duty in our heart, it becomes difficult; it becomes a load. But if it is really a privilege, even though it may be a load, the Lord will help us carry that load. So we need to be careful this week that we guard our minds and hearts, and this is really on my heart. The enemy is always looking for something to disturb us, to disturb our lives so that our minds and hearts are caught up with something else besides the Lord’s heart and the Lord’s purpose for this time.

You know, things do not just happen; there is always something behind it. So be careful this week. Guard your mind; guard your hearts; guard what you are doing, and be careful lest you get

a bum knee like I did. (I am just joking now.) But it is something you have to think about, and be prepared in your heart.

Let's begin by reading Revelation 1:9-11: "I, John,. who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the Isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. What thou seest write in the book and send it to the seven churches." (which are in Asia which is Asia Minor which is actually Turkey today.

John's Imprisonment

John, as we know his situation, was in a little bit of a difficulty. He was exiled to the Island of Patmos right across the Aegean Sea from where he was on the Isle of Patmos, and on a clear day he might even have been able to see the outline of the land where the seven churches in Asia Minor were. It had been a difficult time. What preceded John's being exiled was that in 64 AD the Roman Emperor Nero burned Rome, and he conveniently blamed the Christians. He was the one who burned it, but he blamed the Christians, and there began to be a great persecution of Christians, and many of them scattered all over the European area.

In 70 AD, as all of this was going on, Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and Josephus reported that a little over a million Jews were killed during that time, and many Christians were also killed. But they were mostly Jews, of course. The persecution continued under the Emperor Domitian, who was the one that exiled John to the Isle of Patmos around 95 AD.

So what was on John's heart? There was a lot of persecution going on, and he probably was looking over the sea that morning where the seven churches were located. Normally, he would have been among them, maybe at the Lord's Table. Now he was exiled, and the saints were scattered. They were being persecuted and in hiding. The church was in dire circumstances, and his heart was filled with concern for the brothers and sisters, and for the Lord's Church. He was the last of those original apostles who had actually seen Christ in His earthly ministry, and they were able to firsthand testify of what they had seen and heard of the Lord Jesus Christ. But now he was not available to help in encouraging the saints in this dire time in the history of the church. He had given his life to the Lord Jesus and to His church, and he was one who shared the Word of God and held the testimony of Jesus. In fact, he was so powerful that the king had exiled him to get him out of the way. In his heart he may have been thinking, "Lord, is Your church going to survive? Are the saints going to make it through all this persecution? What will happen to the testimony of Jesus that the church was to uphold? I think he was a bit broken hearted, not for himself, but over the testimony of Jesus, over the Lord's church.

So as we go into this conference, do we have that concern like the Apostle John had? He was concerned about the church. Are we concerned about the church? This was on John's heart. Is it on our heart? It is the Lord's heart. The Lord's heart is for the church in this last hour that He might have the bride that He is so looking for. It was also primary in John's heart. Is it primary in our hearts?

The Great Need for Revelation

There is a great need, brothers and sisters. As we have prepared for this conference, we have seen the great need for God's people to receive revelation. Now revelation is not something that comes from man; some thoughts and things may be shared by man, but the revelation has to come from God Himself. That is the difference between knowledge and revelation. Yes, we can have knowledge, but it takes revelation for it to get into our hearts or to get inside of us, and that is what is needed. The revelation that we receive is meant to grab our lives, to become our very life. We need this heavenly vision that we have been talking about.

The Heavenly Vision is *the* Christ

That heavenly vision is Christ, *The* Christ. What is *The* Christ? It is Christ the Head and the church as His body through which all the fulness that is in the Head can be manifest in His body. The heavenly vision. We have heard it for many years. The conferences has been about this all these years, but have we really seen the depths of it? Has it entered into our hearts so that it is alive in our hearts, and we have a similar seeing that our Brother John had that day? It is not just a mental apprehension but an inward seeing. That is the revelation that captures us and keeps us.

We have actually been studying that little book, "The Heavenly Vision" in our group, and something really caught my attention Friday night. Brother Stephen said, "The heavenly vision is mandatory; it is not optional. That really got me. Sometimes we think, "Well, some people have vision, some don't." Brothers and sisters, it should not be that way. Every Christian should have that heavenly vision. God intended it that way. And that is what the conference is about.

When we first see the heavenly vision, it captures us, doesn't it? It did me as a young man, twenty-eight years old when I first heard Stephen share. The first message which I heard was on the birth of the church, and I have shared this before. But when he said that the church is not an organization but an organism, wow! You talk about flood lights coming on in my soul and heart, it did that night, and I have never been the same since. But that was revelation that came from the Lord. Yes, our brother Stephen shared on it, but it took the Lord, the Holy Spirit, to really open my eyes, and I got a glimpse of what the Lord was after. Our Brother Stephen always said that you get an outline in the beginning and then it has to be filled in.

I had the privilege with my Brother Kenny at his structural engineering firm for fourteen years. Most of the work we did was designing steel structures. We did some concrete structures, but mostly steel. Now, when you go out and ride around Richmond, you will see a steel structure. That is the outline; that is what you get a glimpse of in the beginning. But once that steel structure is up, then the floors are laid, the walls are put up, but that is not the end of it. They begin to put additional dressing on the outside to improve its looks. And on the inside they begin to build rooms in which people can work in or whatever the building is designed for. And eventually they bring in the carpet and put the pictures on the wall, and it is brought into its full intention. And that is the way vision progresses in you life.

When we first get that glimpse, we do not see everything, but we do have the basics, and we need to continue to have revelation that we can see the full intent of what the building is for.

John Hears the Voice of the King

Well, John was in the Spirit and that is a good thing. On the Lord's Day, he was occupied with the church and the condition of the church, and I am sure he was praying before the Lord, deep in thoughts and having a deep concern, but all of a sudden he heard a voice behind him. Now it was not a still, quiet voice; it was a thunderous voice as a trumpet. It was not a voice that was gentle and meek, but it was full of power and authority; it was the voice of a King speaking to John. He had not heard the voice of the Lord in that way before. It was coming from behind him, and so he needed to turn around. His eyes had indeed been on the church. His heart was really a good heart with a concern for the things of the Lord. But the Lord spoke from behind him, and he began to turn.

What do you think the Lord was doing because He spoke from behind John with such a thunderous voice? He was trying to get John's attention, and that was the first real thought I had.

As we go in to this conference, the Lord may thunder at us because He wants to get our attention. Our hearts are in the right place; we want what the Lord wants, but sometimes the Lord has to give us a new look at things. and He has to get our attention away from even good things to look at Him. And He was really saying, "John, you are concerned about the right thing; they are My concerns, but You need to look at Me. You need to keep your eyes upon Me, John. Then you will find out what you need to know."

As we go into this conference, has the Lord gotten your attention yet? As we go into this conference, I keep coming back to the fact that the Lord wants to pour out His Spirit of wisdom and revelation on His people, and we need to pray for that. We need His revelation. Yes, we need brothers and sisters that can share His Word and minister, but we need revelation from the Lord Himself. We need to see that heavenly vision in more fulness than we have ever had before.

Paul was not Disobedient to the Heavenly Vision

We do not want to just know about things; we want to see things. We want to be captured by what we see, and we want to be obedient to it. And that reminds me of Paul when he said, "King Agrippa, I saw this heavenly vision, and it gripped me, and I was not disobedient to what I saw." This is the Lord's concern for this conference; this is what is on His heart. This conference is not just for ourselves, it is for all of God's people. The Lord needs to get our attention; He wants to get our eyes focused on Him, and just as He said to John, "I am the Alpha and Omega; I am the first and the last. All of the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him. He is the Head of the body, the church, and He said that the church is to be the fulness of Me.

I think the Lord is saying, "I am concerned about you." He was concerned about John, but He is concerned about you and me also. "I have given My blood for you, and you are of great concern to me, not only personally but as a member of My body. I gave My life for you, but I gave My life for the church. I am the beginning and the end. You are Mine. I am your beginning, and I will be your end. The good work that I have started in you, I will finish. I have placed you in My body in a very specific place that you might serve My purpose. Remember, the church is to be My bride,

My eternal companion. I love her dearly, and what I began at Calvary and Pentecost, I will complete. I will build My church. I will have My bride.”

Brothers and sisters, John needed that assurance in his heart. The Lord is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, not only in His life personally but for the church itself. He needed that assurance in his heart at that time.

Revelation 1:12-18: “And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girded about his chest with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were a flame of fire; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hands seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength.”

And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying to me, ‘Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen;’ and I have the keys of hell and death.”

What John Saw

So what did John see when he turned around? He saw something that he had never seen before. He saw the majesty, the majesty of the King, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He saw the exalted, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. He saw Him as the Son of Man with a linen garment down to His feet. He saw the righteousness of this One, righteousness that far exceeded anything that he could have imagined, and it was so brilliant that it caused him to fall down at His feet.

I think it was similar to the experience that Isaiah had. We read in chapter 6 what he saw: “I saw the Lord in the temple, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.” And what did He say? He said, “Woe is me; I am a man of unclean lips, and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” He was undone, just as John was, over being in the Presence of such righteousness.

Upon this One’s breast was the golden girdle. He was full of agape love; that was his strength and power. And His hair was white as snow—wisdom. Not only did wisdom come from Him, He *is* wisdom; He is our wisdom. His eyes were as a flame of fire. This One could discern everything; nothing got passed Him; He was so discerning.

I remember when Peter denied the Lord three times, and afterwards the cock sounded three times. and the Lord looked at Peter with those discerning eyes, and it crushed him. His feet were like fine brass in a furnace—the righteous One, the Judge of all the earth. Judgment is in His hands. The voice of many waters—a voice full of power and authority; there is no authority like Him. There was no voice with such authority. His right hand held the seven stars, and the word tells us that the stars are of the seven churches. He is the Head of the church, and He has the church securely in His hands. There may be a lot of problems in the church, but it is in His hands. And out of His mouth was a sharp two-edged sword— the Word which divides soul and spirit. His countenance was as the sun shining in His strength. It was glorious! It was all glorious, so glorious that John had fallen down at His feet. The Lord is so gracious, and He touched John. It did not

destroy him; He could have because His glory is so great, but in grace He touched John and lifted him up. Oh, our dear brother, John had seen the Lord as a Lamb, but he never saw the Lion. Brothers and sisters, what a difference it made in John's life!

The Lord Standing in the Midst of the Seven Churches

So what was the Lord doing when John saw Him? He was standing in the midst of the seven churches. That is where the Lord's heart is, that is where His concern is. The church is His passion, and that is why we see this great level of revelation in the last days of this age. The Lord is in the midst of His churches. John sees that the Lord's burden is the same burden that he has, and I am sure that encouraged him. He sees the Bridegroom examining His bride, and He begins to reveal the condition of the church and what it will go through from the early church represented by Ephesus to the last church before He returns, which is Laodicea. As the Lord is looking, He points out many flaws and wrinkles which means that the bride is not ready. The main issue seems to be this matter of first love. How often the Lord brings us back to this matter of first love. Actually, the lack of first love is what created the problem not only in Ephesus but in all the churches. That which pleased the Lord in Philadelphia was their first love expressed in their love for the Brethren. That is why there was no condemnation for that church. There was brotherly love, and there cannot be brotherly love without first love. Therefore, He commends them.

Now after the Lord goes through and appraises all the churches, I could not help but wonder how John might have felt at that moment. I am sure he had been encouraged by seeing the King, but after he heard the condition of the churches, particularly that last church, Laodicea, I wonder if he did not become discouraged. I mean, how discouraging it must have been to see the condition of the church in the Laodicean age, which by the way, is the age we are living in now. The church is lukewarm, cold-hearted towards the Lord. He is no longer in their midst, and He is standing outside knocking, wanting to come in. What a disappointment this must have been to John. It seemed hopeless.

The Throne was Revealed to John

Revelation 4:1-2: "After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me." It is still the Lord, this mighty powerful voice speaking, and He said, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat upon the throne."

John was pondering all that the Lord had shown him, and I cannot help but believe that if I had been John's place I would have been a bit perplexed and discouraged when I saw the way it was apparently ending with this last church. But then a door is opened, and the voice tells him, "Come up here." What is the Lord doing? He is saying to John, "Okay, John, you need a new perspective, you need the heavenly perspective; you need My perspective, and I am going to show you what will be." So He lifts John up into the heavenlies.

Brothers and sisters, I thought about this. In this world we are living in today we can get very discouraged, can't we? I am at times, and I almost had to quit listening to the news. We see these wars going on, in Israel particularly, and all that is happening in the world. We see the tremendous

increase in lawlessness and hatred of Christianity, the hatred of God Himself. It is becoming a new norm even in America. The church is in a weakened condition. It does not really carry much of the testimony of Jesus. It has lost its passion for the Lord Himself. It is no longer in first love. So as we look at the world, we look at the church, we look at ourselves, and it all appears a bit hopeless. So the Lord is giving John a new perspective. "John, you just cannot look at this thing with an earthly perspective. You have to see it from My perspective."

The New Perspective

Now just to help you with this matter of the new perspective, I will just give a little example. We all experience trials, don't we? There are some which are very serious, even devastating at times. There are some inexplicable trials that we cannot explain what has happened to us or our family or those who are close to us. Our first reaction is to blame the circumstances: "Oh Lord; these are terrible circumstance!. What are we going to do, Lord? We need to be delivered from these circumstances." Or we might see our trial as our boss or even our mates or our children or our government, or other people. That is our natural tendency. Therefore, we want to escape this trial, so the first thing we do is pray for its deliverance. Well, I am here today to say that we need a new perspective on our trials.

James 1:2-4: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials."

Now how joyous have you been in your various trials, brothers and sisters? I think it is interesting that he did not say, "Be happy in your trials." But he did say, "Count it joy, knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience, but let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Brothers and sisters, we want to escape trials. We think it is going to undo us, and we will never recover. We are full of anxiety and worry, and that is our perspective, but God's perspective is that He is actually using these trials to get rid of the spots and wrinkles in our lives to prepare us for that day when we will be presented with the other brothers and sisters as His bride. Therefore, for that purpose the Lord is using these trials in our lives.

Now think about it; we should rejoice in the fact that the Lord loves us enough that He is willing to try us, discipline us, even put us through the fire at times that we may come out as pure gold. Think about our Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the cross. We think of the cross as the most awful unjust act that has happened on this earth. It is terrible, and that is the earthly view, and it is a right view. But what did it say about our Lord Jesus? "For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross. It was through that very cross that God was going to accomplish His will and purpose for mankind, and have a companion for His Son. He had to deliver us from our sin. So as despicable as the cross was, it was a mighty loving work of God for us. So that is a different perspective."

Brothers and sisters, as we go into the conference, may the Lord begin to give us the heavenly perspective.

John Sees the Throne

What did John see? He said that he saw the throne. Halleluia! He saw the throne, and he saw the One who was on the throne. And the Lord showed him: "John, the throne is in control." The

throne is in control of your life, and the throne is in control of the building of the church and the preparing of the bride. We need to see that, particularly when we get dismayed and discouraged, the throne is in control. We need to see it; we need to know it, and we need to believe it. *We need to believe it.*

Revelation 5:1, 5-6: “And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals?”

Verses 5-6: “One of the elders said to me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has prevailed to open the book and loose those seals, and I beheld and lo in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts and of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain.”

John Sees the Lamb

Then what does John see? He thinks he is going to see a lion, but he sees the Lamb. The Lamb is the lion, that Lamb spirit is what conquered the enemy. The Lamb’s spirit is what conquered you and me. He is the lion of the tribe of Judah, and he has the power to execute God’s will. He is the One that will fulfill God’s purpose. He takes the book and begins to open the seals. The future is in His hands. The fulfilling of God’s purpose, the fulfilling of the heavenly vision is in the hands of the Lord Jesus.

Opposition to God’s Will

As He begins to open the seals, what do we see? We see warfare, we see opposition. Brothers and sisters, there is opposition to God’s will being accomplished. There is opposition to the heavenly vision being fulfilled. There is opposition to God’s eternal purpose to have Christ to be first and last in all things, to be Head of the church. There is opposition, great tremendous warfare.

Then John who is in the heavenlies, he is taken to a high mountain, an even higher perspective. I do not know where that high mountain is in the heavenlies, but he is taken there because what he is about to see is so glorious, so tremendous, that he needs a much higher perspective to see the fulfillment of the heavenly vision and God’s eternal purpose. What does he see?

A New Heaven and a New Earth

Revelation 21:1-2: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”—the heavenly vision.”

Oh, it has now been completed, and John has that high, great, new perspective. The Lord will build His church. All the tribulation, all the persecution, all the opposition, all that the enemy means for evil, the Lord will use to achieve His own purpose to have what He wants, to bring His bride into maturity and fulness. Remember, she is to be the fulness of Christ. To me that is even

hard to imagine to be the fulness of Christ. But that is His purpose to be able to display the fulness of Christ and to become His instrument in the ages to come. The Lord will achieve His purpose; He will have His bride.

I am sure, brothers and sisters that John's heart was greatly strengthened, and he was ready at that point, I really believe when he saw this he was ready to press on. He might have been on the Isle of Patmos, but he was going to press on in the Lord. He was not going to give up. He was going to fight the good fight. He was going to stay in the race and he would finish the course.

In essence, brothers and sisters, it is the same vision that caught Abraham. Remember it says, "The Lord of glory appeared to Abraham." He was an idol worshiper in Ur of Chaldee, and the Lord just appeared to him, and it says, "The glory of the Lord appeared to Abraham." But He gave him a vision and we do not find that out until we read the book of Hebrews where it says that Abraham went out and he looked for a city that had foundations whose builder and maker is God. It is the same vision.

On the Damascus Road, Paul had a vision of Christ the King, the Head, the church's body, and he is the one who had so much revelation on the church that he shared with us. And praise the Lord, that vision caught Paul, and it kept him through all that he went through, all of his many tribulations. He was able to testify to King Agrippa when he said, "I was not disobedient to this heavenly vision."

Brothers and sisters, indeed, the vision had caught Paul, and he testified in his last words to Timothy: "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course, I have kept the faith," and that was at the end of his life, just before he was martyred. The vision had kept him faithful so that he might finish the course.

So now as we go into this conference I pray the Lord can do a few things. One, get our attention, get our eyes on Him. May He be able to reveal to us even more of this heavenly vision of God's heart so that we might, like Paul, be able to testify, "Lord, I have been faithful to what I have seen, I have not disobeyed the heavenly vision. May the Lord have mercy.

Lord, we do come to Thee today. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You brought us into something so tremendous that I believe it is almost impossible to relay the greatness and the glory of what You are doing in building Your church and satisfying the heart of Your Son in giving to Him that bride, that helpmate, that will go through the ages to come together. Lord Jesus, this is no small thing. It is a tremendous thing, and we need You to open our eyes. Sometimes, even though we have seen something, our eyes get a little dim particularly in our older age. Some of it seems to fade. Lord, renew our eyesight. Strengthen us, Lord, that we might be faithful to what we see in the days to come. Oh, Lord Jesus, do not allow us to drop out. Lord, draw us up that we might have a new perspective on our life and our life in the church. Lord, we just come to You today and we ask that You would grace us with great blessings as we go into this conference. In Jesus' name. Amen.

