

Lecture 1 : Vision and God's Voice

People of vision hear God's voice

► Introduction – A nation without vision faces ruin.

Proverbs 29:18 says: Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law. People do not live on food and air alone, but on the Word of God and vision.

A person without vision is probably not much different from an animal. A person of vision is always full of life and enthusiasm. Such a person arises early in the morning, and is characterized by a joy and thankfulness that envelopes all kinds of suffering and pain.

A person of vision has a song to sing, a flag to wave, a slogan to shout, and has a reason to die.

A person of vision is a person who hears God's voice. Such a person is very different from people who strive after personal dreams and ambitions. A person of vision does not fear suffering, but instead matures and grows through suffering.

1. Vision begins with hearing God's voice.

Vision begins with hearing God's voice. It is something that God personally reveals to you and asks of you, and is not something that you've thought about or dreamt about all along.

Noah had a vision about building an ark (Genesis 7:1,5): The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation....And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him. Noah began building the ark when he heard God's voice.

Abraham had a vision for becoming the forefather of faith (Genesis 12:1–3): The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." Abraham heard God's voice and left Ur of the Chaldeans.

Moses had a vision to go to the promised land (Exodus 3:10): "...So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." Moses heard God's voice and embarked on the exodus from Egypt.

The prophets of the Old Testament were not inspired by a unique patriotism, philosophy, or passion, but prophesied after hearing God's word. God's word is vision.

Take the example shown by our Lord Jesus. According to Matthew 3:13–17, when Jesus was on the bank of the Jordan River, the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon him, and he heard God's voice.

The twelve disciples of Jesus and Paul all received their orders from God and heard

the Holy Spirit. A person of vision is one who hears God's voice and obediently follows that voice.

*Where does your vision come from? Who gave it to you? (Let's pause to reflect on this.)

2. True vision comes from God.

True vision comes from God. God's Word creates a vision.

We are told not to listen to the words of the false prophets in Jeremiah 23:16: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD."

The difference between words spoken "from their own minds" and the words "from the mouth of the LORD" are as wide apart as the earth is from the sky.

There are people in Ezekiel 13:3 who prophesy without having heard from God: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing.

Further along, in verse 7, it says: Have you not seen false visions and uttered lying divinations when you say, "The LORD declares," though I have not spoken?" They spoke false prophesies and fabricated stories.

The most dangerous people are false religious leaders who claim that their thoughts are from God. Mistaking Satan's voice for God's voice, they mislead people down the road of destruction. In other cases, they may be overcome by a severe case of egomania. Not all visions are visionary, and not all words are the Word. Only vision that is based on God's Word is true vision. God's vision is eternal and is sturdy as a house built on a rock.

3. Vision grows with suffering.

God-given vision undergoes a maturing process called suffering.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:10-12: Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Vision grows with suffering.

Noah suffered when he had to build an ark on a mountaintop, Abraham suffered when he had to leave his father's household to go to the land of God's indication, and Moses suffered when he had to lead the nation of Israel from Egypt to enter a land of milk and honey. There is no prophet who did not undergo suffering.

Jesus had to suffer on the cross. Isaiah 53:7 foretold: He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. This is a picture of the suffering servant.

Jesus' disciples also suffered. Stephen and Paul also experienced suffering. The 2000 years of the history of the Christian Church, attest to the fact that God's people realized God's vision through suffering. God's vision is refined and completed through suffering.

4. Vision is the driving force behind leadership.

A person who fails to look to the future can not be a leader. A person strives only as far as he sees, and advances only as far as his thoughts extend. A person's achievements are bound by his limitations.

Vision allows a person to look to the future and causes a person to act accordingly. A leader is only as big as his vision is big, and strong as his vision is strong. A person without vision is a person with nothing to do. Vision provides a leader with leadership and vitality.

While a leader may be elected by a majority, leadership is raised by vision. A church grows to fit the size of the church's vision (Church apologetics) and the church leadership. God-given vision is not merely an earthly event, but a heavenly event, and not merely a matter of the betterment of humankind, but of salvation of souls. A person with dreams from heaven can change the church and can change the world.