



THE BURDEN OF VISION

PRINCIPLE OF TRANSMISSION
AND CALIBRATION OF VISION
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY CHURCH

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Calibration And Transmission of Vision in the Twenty-First Century Church

A Prophetic Perspective

"And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 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."
Habakkuk 2:2-3

Heaven Functions from Vision

Heaven functions from a position of vision. Nothing God does, or intends to do, within the human realm comes into being apart from vision, because He declares "the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10) and then works history toward what He has already seen. Everything He assigns to us begins in the same way, as a seed. The development, growth, and maturity of that seed follow the maturing of a vision designed to reform and transform a society or a nation, so that what we finally see in a transformed community was already present in the seed, waiting for the right soil and the right season.

Jesus described the kingdom in these terms: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:26-28). The future harvest is written into the seed from the day it is sown, and the sower's task is to plant it in the right ground and guard the process until the harvest appears.

Whether we realize it or not, vision reflects our spirituality. By spirituality I do not mean something spooky, nor the mere practice of religion. Spirituality means a clear biblical understanding of God's divine design, His order, His standards, and His systems, an understanding deep enough that we can translate what is unseen into the natural, physical, and material world. The writer of Hebrews tells us that "the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). Creation itself came out of the invisible, and every lasting work in the earth follows that same order.

Nothing of lasting value will be built in the natural realm unless it is born from vision. Vision is bigger than we are and reaches beyond what the human mind can fully comprehend, which is why it cannot remain only in the spirit. It must pass from the spirit into the mind, and the mind must learn to value and appreciate it through the eyes of the spirit, before it can find expression in the natural. Paul described this way of seeing when he wrote that "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

The Burden of Transmission

The burden of vision lies in transmitting it, from one person to another and from one generation to the next. The limitations we see across nations, and the failure to carry progress from one generation to another in economics, in politics, in leadership, and in every environment of life, arise from two deficiencies. The first is a lack of clarity of vision. The second is the inability to transmit that vision to those who come after us.

Vision involves more than the ability to hear God or to receive an initiative from Him. A vision has not proved itself true until it can be transmitted to the next generation. Even when what God gave you has reached a point of great success, its success does not end with you, because its true success appears in the generation that receives it and carries it further. Developing the mechanisms for continuity is therefore the burden of every true visionary leader.

Scripture gives us a sobering record of what happens when this burden is neglected. Joshua led Israel into the land, and "the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua." Yet a few verses later we read that "there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel" (Judges 2:7, 10). One generation had seen the wonders of God with its own eyes, while the next did not know Him at all. Somewhere between the elders and their children, the transmission failed.

God's intention was always generational. The psalmist writes that the fathers were commanded to make His works known to their children, "that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God" (Psalm 78:6-7). Paul carried the same understanding into the life of the church when he instructed Timothy: "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Four generations stand inside that single instruction, Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others also, and the vision moves through each of them because Paul built for continuity beyond his own lifetime.

Moses understood this before he died. He asked the Lord to set a man over the congregation, "that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd," and God instructed him to lay his hands on Joshua and to "put some of thine honour upon him" (Numbers 27:17-20). Moses did not leave Joshua to discover the vision after his death. He had kept Joshua beside him on the mountain, at the door of the tabernacle, and in the battles of the wilderness, so that by the time the mantle passed, the vision had already taken root in him.

When the People Cannot See What the Leader Carries

Nothing in the environment of the prophetic is as burdensome as carrying a vision the people struggle to capture. A leader may communicate it in words, pray it into them, and seek every form of spiritual impartation, and still find that the people do not grasp what he is saying, either in its words or in its value. The vision burns in him with clarity, while in them it remains a sound they hear without seeing its shape.

Our Lord Jesus Christ carried this burden on earth. At a certain point in His ministry He began to unfold the vision of His departure and to prepare His disciples to carry that vision into the world and into the next frontier. He spoke plainly, in a language they understood, yet they could not comprehend Him. Luke records that after He told them He would be delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged, killed, and raised on the third day, "they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken" (Luke 18:34). Mark adds that "they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him" (Mark 9:32).

He did not give up on explaining the vision. He kept speaking it through His death, His burial, His resurrection, and up to His ascension. "I have yet many things to say unto you," He told them, "but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). He measured what they could receive and kept pouring in what they could hold. After His resurrection, "then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:45), and for forty days He appeared to them, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The Lord who had spoken of the kingdom for three and a half years spent His final forty days on earth speaking of the same kingdom to the same men, because they had still not fully received it.

Every true leader lives with this burden, the burden of imparting what he carries while knowing it can reform and transform both his immediate environment and the future he and his people are trying to build. Everyone wants to be part of something great, something productive, something beyond themselves. The challenge lies in seeing and understanding how to work out the mechanisms and systems that drive a vision until it becomes animated in the lives and minds of the people. We have to stay with that burden, live with it, and keep engaging and managing it until certain people begin to buy into the vision.

Tabernacles on the Mountain

Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the highest dimension He could bring them, believing they would catch the vision and understand it. On the Mount of Transfiguration they saw His face shine as the sun and His raiment become white as the light, and they saw Moses and Elijah speaking with Him "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). The conversation on the mountain concerned the very vision Jesus had been trying to transmit to them. Yet Peter did not understand why the Lord had brought them there, and his conclusion was to build: "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Mark tells us why he said it: "For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid" (Mark 9:5-6).

Jesus was not speaking of building tabernacles. He was building people, forming lives that would carry, in the mobility of their transformation, the power to reform society. A tabernacle on the mountain would have held the glory in one place; a transformed disciple would carry it into Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

It took the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord for Peter to step into that understanding. Years later he wrote as a man who had finally seen what the mountain meant: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5). The man who once wanted to raise three tabernacles now understood that God builds His house out of living people. He recalled the mountain in his second letter, and this time he treated it as the confirmation of "a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Peter 1:16-19).

Building What God Has Not Asked For

The minds of men always turn toward building something that will give them a sense of security and a legacy, though the security is often false and the legacy only an imitation of one. Absalom, in his lifetime, "reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name" (2 Samuel 18:18).

He raised the stone to secure his memory, and Scripture remembers him for a rebellion that ended with his body cast into a pit in the wood and covered with a heap of stones.

We see the same impulse in the things of the Spirit. Whenever we lack true visionary understanding and a well-calibrated insight into the divine architecture of the Spirit, we assume that when God brings us to a new height of spiritual advancement, the right response to what He has shown us is to build something in the earth. Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration is the critical example. Luke tells us he made his proposal "not knowing what he said" (Luke 9:33), because the encounter moved him to act before he understood what he had seen. The desire to build was never Peter's error; his error lay in wanting to build what God had neither demanded nor called for.

Heaven answered him before he could finish. "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). The Father gave Peter no building plan; He gave him an instruction to hear the Son. When the disciples lifted up their eyes, "they saw no man, save Jesus only" (Matthew 17:8), and the next scene finds them at the foot of the mountain, facing a father whose son was tormented and whom the other disciples could not heal (Matthew 17:14-16). The glory Peter wanted to enclose on the mountain was meant to go down into the valley where people were in need.

We need to watch for this particularly in the prophetic. When God lifts us to a new height in the Spirit, to an elevated reality, we must not assume that whatever He shows us has to be translated into something we set up in the earth. Heaven shows us things for many reasons and purposes, and many of them never require a structure. Paul was caught up into paradise and "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:4), and fourteen years passed before he spoke of the experience at all. Some revelations are given to form the one who receives them, some to prepare him for what lies ahead, and some to confirm a word God has already spoken, as the mountain later confirmed to Peter "a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19).

This is where religion is established, because religion manufactures experience out of what somebody once saw or heard. It raises a tabernacle and a marker around the encounter, so that people begin to go to that place for the sake of what once happened there. Israel did this with the brazen serpent. God commanded Moses to make it in the wilderness, and everyone bitten who looked upon it lived (Numbers 21:8-9). Centuries later the people were burning incense to it, until Hezekiah "brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan" (2 Kings 18:4), a thing of brass.

The instrument God used for healing in one generation had become an object of worship in another, because the people built their devotion around the memory of an encounter while the God of the encounter had moved on.

This becomes very dangerous when we set out to build the intentions of God. Building is something God wants us to do, and He wants us to carry out His purposes in the earth. Yet we cannot build what speaks only of a place we go to and gather in to have an experience, simply because God once moved there or spoke there. The Samaritan woman held to such a place: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" (John 4:20). Jesus answered that the hour was coming when neither that mountain nor Jerusalem would define worship, because "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). Her fathers' mountain had become a boundary drawn around God, while the Father was looking for worshippers.

What God did in the past does not become an eternal point of reference. We must learn to move from what God did and what He showed us to the next thing He wants to do, so that the move of yesterday does not become the cage that keeps us from the move of today. "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?" (Isaiah 43:18-19). In the wilderness, whenever the cloud lifted from the tabernacle, the children of Israel journeyed, and wherever the cloud rested, there they pitched their tents (Numbers 9:17). The one structure God commanded for the wilderness was built to be carried, so that His people could follow Him.

This is the lesson Peter teaches us. He wanted to build a structure around an experience, while Jesus wanted to carry the experience into the lives of people so that the church could keep advancing. John stood on that same mountain, and years later he wrote that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory...)" (John 1:14). The word he used for dwelt means to pitch a tent, to tabernacle. God had already chosen where His tabernacle would stand, and He chose to place it in human lives.

However simple we may think vision is, transmitting it into the hearts of people is a long work. The vision must become a seed in them, planted in the right soil and the right environment, growing until it begins to express itself in its due season. Jesus spoke of seed that fell by the wayside, on stony places, among thorns, and on good ground (Matthew 13:3-8). The same seed fell on all four, and the condition of the soil decided what each produced.

Calibration: Speaking the Vision Again

For this reason there must be continual and regular calibration of the vision. We must keep revisiting it, keep speaking of it, and keep allowing it to speak in the hearts of those who have opened themselves to it, while we continue to engage those who have the potential to buy into it until the seed takes hold. Habakkuk was told that "the vision is yet for an appointed time... though it tarry, wait for it" (Habakkuk 2:3), and that waiting is anything but idle. It is the season in which the vision is spoken, clarified, tested, and spoken again.

Calibration is one of the greatest challenges in the body of Christ today, because so many assume they already understand the vision. The children of Israel thought they knew it, and so did the disciples of our Lord. The people who left Egypt with Moses believed they understood where God was taking them, yet their perceptions and assumptions had been formed by the imposing culture of Egypt. That culture so occupied their minds that whenever something foreign to its architecture came to them, they rejected it, refused it, and challenged it. They left Egypt in body while Egypt remained in their appetites: "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away" (Numbers 11:5-6). God fed them with bread from heaven, and they measured it against the diet of their bondage.

The same happens to us. The Babylonian culture of this present world shapes our thinking long before we come to God, so that when the vision of heaven arrives with its different order, the old architecture of our minds resists it. Paul's instruction still stands: "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). A mind still conformed to the system the vision came to replace cannot prove the vision.

The Posture of a Child

We have to keep engaging our lives from the posture of a child. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). For a vision to gain access into our lives and grow there, it needs an attitude willing to learn, willing to be corrected, willing to be challenged, and willing to surrender to the new, even when the old has held strong influence and control over us.

Peter showed us that attitude on the water. When he saw Jesus walking on the sea, he said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water" (Matthew 14:28). He left the comfort of the boat and stepped into what, in the natural realm, looked certain to sink him. Vision brings us to such places. It moves us out of our comfort zone into an arena that looks as though it will drown us, a place from which nothing good seems able to come.

Nathanael asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). It takes vision to see what others have condemned, rejected, and discarded. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner" (Psalm 118:22). The builders knew their trade, yet their sight had been trained by the wrong pattern, and so they threw aside the very stone on which God would build everything. Unless our sense of life and understanding stays aligned with the heavenly pattern of reason, our own expertise will lead us to reject what God has chosen.

Returning to the Mountain

God said to Moses, "look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exodus 25:40), and the writer of Hebrews repeats the same charge (Hebrews 8:5). Vision requires that we keep returning to the mountain. The mountain is the place of sight, and it is also the place of design, where God shows the blueprint of our lives and of what He has called us to build. Whether we are building a home, a family, a community, or a kingdom gathering, we must as leaders keep engaging that mountain to calibrate and recalibrate our sense of vision.

Vision involves more than sight. It carries the character, the culture, and the wisdom required to engage the natural human realm, because that realm has its own values, its own standards, and its own culture. It has the power to align us, streamline us, and assimilate us into what it wants us to see, think, and build. Away from the mountain, we slowly take on the shape of the environment we were sent to transform.

Whenever we come down from the mountain, we come down fresh, with a clearer understanding of the heart of God. When Moses came down from Sinai, "the skin of his face shone" (Exodus 34:29), and he went up again and again because the people he led were constantly pulled back toward the patterns of Egypt. That freshness keeps a leader in order. Without it, the pressures of life, anxiety, and the challenges mounting upon us will wear us down until we have lost the vision while still believing we are doing something godly.

While Men Slept

The world system works in exactly this way. When it targets a leader, it does not come screaming and shouting; it comes subtly and with great care. Jesus told of a man who sowed good seed in his field, "but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Matthew 13:25). A godly seed had already been planted, and a godly vision was already in the ground. The enemy did not come to destroy that seed or to remove it. He planted another seed alongside it, in the same soil.

The battle is therefore internal, a battle of mindset, of philosophy, and of ideology, and while its effects appear outwardly, its ground lies within us. The enemy's achievement was that he came without anyone noticing and planted what no one saw. The tare in the parable was very likely darnel, a weed that looks almost identical to wheat while it grows and only reveals its difference when the head forms. So two lives grow within us, jostling for our attention and fighting for our values, our standards, and our beliefs, and if we are not careful we will conclude they share the same nature.

When the servants asked whether they should gather out the tares, the master answered, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:29-30). Separation belonged to the reapers, skilled hands who could tell the real from the counterfeit at the proper time. The writer of Hebrews speaks of those "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Removing what the enemy has sown requires maturity of that kind, because zeal without discernment will tear up what God planted in its hurry to remove what the enemy sowed.

It takes vision to understand all of this, because in trying to do something good we may destroy what was designed to help people. Paul warned, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). We live in a complex world, and the church today has allowed false vision to be sown among us, so that good and evil now grow together in the same field.

The Two Trees in the House of God

Many in the church have come to live from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and they have eaten from it so long that they struggle even to appreciate what the fruit of the tree of life looks like. Some do not see it at all; others see it and cannot recognize it. The fruit of the knowledge of good and evil still looks religious, still speaks of doing good, and still produces works, programs, and results, though its source is human reasoning cut off from the life of God.

These are complex issues, and we need to understand them in our own lives, because they play out in every sphere of life: in the family and the raising of children, in the economy, in finance, in leadership, and in governance. The enemy has sown his seed into every area of human life. We therefore need seasoned, mature prophetic people, carrying strong apostolic and governmental grace, who can see into the nature of the days we live in, like the children of Issachar, "which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32).

This is why vision must be translated in a progressive way that people can see and buy into. Without it, we will keep facing issues that truly need correcting while using the wrong methodology to correct them, applying the wrong order and the wrong principle to a problem we have rightly identified, so that our diagnosis comes from discernment while our remedy still comes from the wrong tree.

The Wisdom of Response

Vision must constantly order our values and our priorities. It teaches us how to manage our time and the resources of God, and how to lead and guide people along the right path. Sometimes it requires us to be forceful, and sometimes it requires subtlety; sometimes we must speak openly, sometimes we must say nothing at all, and sometimes we must walk away completely. Solomon recognized "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:7), and the book of Proverbs sets two opposite instructions side by side, "Answer not a fool according to his folly" and "Answer a fool according to his folly" (Proverbs 26:4-5), because wisdom lies in discerning which one the moment demands.

Our Lord moved in this wisdom. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the temple (John 2:15), and He stood before Pilate and "answered him to never a word" (Matthew 27:14). When the crowds wanted to take Him by force and make Him king, "he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:15). The same Christ was forceful, silent, and withdrawn at different moments, and none of these responses came from temperament; each came from His knowledge of the Father's vision and of the hour in which He stood.

At every juncture, as we deal with vision and its calibration, we must know where we are in the seasons and what the Spirit of God is saying to us. A response that was right in one season can be wrong in the next, and only a leader who keeps returning to the mountain will know the difference.

The Shifting of Seasons

We are moving toward the days of the end, and toward 2030, which I believe will once again define and redefine creation and humanity. We faced such a moment between 2019 and 2023, through the years of the Covid pandemic until it was finally behind us. In that time God spoke to us about the end of one season and the ushering in of another. Those years marked a shift out of a season governed by a particular sense of direction, insight, and leadership, into a new season that opened in 2023.

From that point we began to see the rise of a new day, a new sense of life and of wisdom, and the Lord began to speak to us about Noah. After the flood, "the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat" (Genesis 8:4), and Noah came down to engage the earth again under a renewed mandate: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1).

He stepped out into a world where the old order had passed, and he had to build again from what God had shown him. The Lord has been calling His people to come down from that mountain in the same way, to engage the earth with a new sense of vision, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and grace.

All of this must be translated into how we live now, and into how we understand where our lives are going. Daniel was told that at the time of the end "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). It is not by accident that we are now dealing with the world of artificial intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence and the Stewardship of Resources

Artificial intelligence belongs to the movement carrying humanity into a different world, one that many are not truly ready or prepared for. Many still approach it from a very low concept, using it to translate something at the peripheral level, without understanding what this technology is, what this resource is, and how we can best use it to advance the agenda of God before the enemy hijacks it for his own.

AI is a tool, an instrument, a resource, and it can go whichever way its users direct it. Its direction will depend on the quality of the vision, the spirit, and the understanding of those who hold leadership over its affairs. When the builders of Babel gathered with one language and one purpose, God said, "now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Genesis 11:6), and their united capacity served a human vision that reached toward heaven for its own name. When God wanted His tabernacle built, He filled Bezaleel "with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works" (Exodus 31:3-4). Skill and invention were present in both places; what differed was the spirit and the vision that governed them.

We must be able to discern all of this, because it belongs to the vision. God is releasing resources, and we must learn how to use them and also how to collaborate with one another in advancing His purposes through them. AI in particular has arrived in a season in which God is bringing us to a point of gathering.

The Season of Gathering

The Spirit of God is bringing the body and the church together again, and our resources must connect to one another so that we can build the spiritual house, the mountain of the Lord that must be exalted above every other mountain. Isaiah saw it: "it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2). As the mountain of God grows and advances, the mountains of Babylon are rising too, and the battle of ideology and philosophy is taking root in every aspect of human life.

We cannot disengage from that battle, and we cannot fight it as Lone Rangers, each engaging from our own little corner of strength. We have to collaborate in what God is doing. An understanding of God's overarching vision for creation and for humanity is what will allow us to walk together, so that what the Spirit is saying and demanding of His church in this season becomes the channel that propels His purposes forward. Without that understanding everyone builds a personal silo and a private camp, which is exactly what the devil wants.

This is why we see ministry after ministry pouring its resources into its own work rather than into the things of God. They do not understand the vision of God, which reaches beyond one man, one church, or one organization, however small or however mega it may appear. Jesus prayed "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). He tied the belief of the world to the oneness of His people.

The gathering of God's intention in these last days must be understood within His vision for human redemption, human restoration, national reformation, and global transformation. While the world breaks apart, as we see in the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in Daniel's day, God is building His church. Daniel watched a stone "cut out without hands" strike the image upon its feet of iron and clay and break it to pieces, and "the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34-35). The kingdoms of men stand on feet that cannot hold together, while the kingdom God is building keeps growing until it fills everything.

Stones Shaped at the Quarry

That church must be built within the understanding of God's vision, and it must carry the same divine architecture Solomon showed us. "The house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Kings 6:7).

Every stone used on the building site was first cut at the quarry and shaped to the right form, so that it could fit into its place without noise, without jostling for power, and without trying to overshadow another.

We must come to that clarity so that God's prophetic intention for our lives is not jeopardized by immaturity. Much of the noise in places where the church is being built is the sound of shaping that should have happened at the quarry, stones being cut on the building site because they resisted the chisel in private. Paul described the goal of every ministry gift as bringing us "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13), so that the whole body is "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth" (Ephesians 4:16).

This is the day God is calling us to maturity, and it takes vision to recognize the areas of our immaturity. It takes vision to see where we remain ignorant, and where we are selfish and self-centered. It takes vision to die to self and live for something bigger than ourselves. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). The seed of vision must die in the ground before it grows, and the same death is required of every leader who wants God's intention, God's house, and God's presence revealed in what has been built.

The Glory That Filled the House

This is what we saw in the temple of Solomon. When Solomon finished building that grand temple, the approval of God was unmistakable. As the priests ministered and the singers lifted their voices, "the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).

God then gave Solomon a word. The temple represented the mountain of God, and He promised to remain there and to manifest His authority in that place: "I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually" (1 Kings 9:3). The promise carried a condition. If Solomon and his sons walked in His order and kept His statutes, His presence would remain; if they turned away from the divine structure and the divine concept, "this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people" (1 Kings 9:7).

The skill to come together and build something grand is only the beginning of vision, which is fulfilled in maintaining the presence of God so that the nations can continually stream to it to learn His laws and be taught His ways. Isaiah heard the nations saying, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths" (Isaiah 2:3). Whether we like it or not, it will take vision beyond what we have defined as vision to build what attracts the nations. What attracts them will not be what the flesh promotes or sanctions, nor what men want to exalt.

John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). When Christ is not exalted and magnified above our gifting, our ideas, our skill, and our professionalism, and when He does not so overwhelm our lives that people see less of us, God cannot dwell in such a temple, however grand and beautiful it may be.

The Grandeur That Could Not Stand

The temple of Herod was one of the wonders of its age. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, wrote that its front was covered with plates of gold that caught the rising sun with such brilliance that those who looked at it had to turn their eyes away, and that the parts not covered in gold were so white that, to travellers approaching from a distance, the whole building looked like a mountain covered with snow. The disciples themselves were overwhelmed by it: "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" Jesus answered, "Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mark 13:1-2).

Herod began that work around 20 BC, and the whole project was completed only a few years before AD 70, when the Romans reduced it to ruins. Within a century of its beginning, and within a handful of years of its completion, the most magnificent religious building of its day lay in rubble. The temple could stand no longer than the principles, the structures, the quality of life, and the agenda it represented. We can build a grand temple, but if it stands for the elevation of man, of human systems and human ideology, it is only a matter of time before it comes down.

It is not enough for us to build. We must build on God's vision, on His divine counsel, on His divine order, and on the prophetic agenda moving the body of Christ toward redemption and the transformation of nations. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1). The translation of vision must come from the hearts of those who understand the mind of Christ and carry the burden of the Lord, those whom He has made "kings and priests unto God" (Revelation 1:6) to establish His counsel on earth.

God will not approve what we build with humanistic, Babylonian principles imported into the things of God, and He will not manifest Himself there, however grand it looks and however loudly we celebrate it.

The Competition of Size

The world's standard works this way: you build something, and people say there is nothing like it, that nobody has ever done such a thing. Give it time, and what you considered the ultimate will become nothing, because someone will outdo you. The builders of Babel said, "let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name" (Genesis 11:4), and every generation since has raised its own tower.

Unfortunately, the same system now operates within the body of Christ as competition. When one ministry builds a fifty-thousand-seat auditorium, another wants to outdo it, and then a third builds for a hundred thousand. The contest has become the size of what we build, while the question of whether it can house God goes unasked. If we build what we call a vision and it cannot hold the presence of God, we have built in vain, and we have built from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, with Babylonian architecture and the materials of this world.

Paul warned the builders of his day to "take heed how he buildeth thereupon," because "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:10, 13). Gold, silver, and precious stones survive the fire, while wood, hay, and stubble do not, however impressive they looked before the fire came. When we build with the instruments and the materials of the Spirit, what we build will attract God, and whatever attracts God will attract the nations.

Elevated Vision

The burden of leadership in this time is the calibration of heavenly vision, building according to the pattern shown to us on the mountain. We will not lower our standard to gather larger numbers or to raise more money. We will keep elevating the values and standards of the kingdom, and those whom God has awakened will be drawn to that order, because the Spirit who awakened them recognizes His own pattern.

This is what I call elevated vision. It rises above the measurements of Babylon, refuses the competition of size, and holds to the pattern of the mountain even when the plain rewards something else. Such a vision must be constantly calibrated, spoken again to those who are receiving it, and placed into the hands of the generation after us, so that what God showed us on the mountain is still standing when we are gone.

