

The Ultimate Vision

Be Like Him

Posted on Feb 1, 2021 by John Miller (<https://www.ucg.org/user/john-miller>) *Estimated reading time: 6 minutes*

Where there is no vision people perish! Proverbs 29:18



We are created in the image of God. When we bear His image responsibly we bring honor to Him.

This proverb makes VISION *existential*; without it, *people perish*. *Vision* may at first seem abstract and difficult to describe, but stated simply, *Vision* is who we are to become. Mission is what we do. History confirms the essential nature of *vision* in national, organizational and personal life.

In his famous speech in Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln rearticulated the *vision* of the “fathers.” The founders envisioned a nation “conceived in liberty” that promised its citizens an elevated state of being—freedom. Lincoln held out this *vision* of freedom and asked whether “any nation so conceived” could long endure.

He called on “the living” to “highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth” (Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, 1863).

That day in Gettysburg, Lincoln invoked the abstract concept of *vision* to save a divided nation on the brink of perishing. So powerful was this *vision* of freedom that it not only saved her from that dark hour of war, it forged into being a nation unlike any other in the history of man. A nation where every man,

woman and child regardless of color, creed or national origin could lay claim to the elevated, but elusive state of “being free.”

This elevated state enabled her to do what no other nation had successfully done—to make “*out of many, one.*” Individuals, regardless of national origin, color or creed were willing to set aside differences, whether petty or cultural, to pursue all that they could become—free.

Lincoln unwittingly brought the truth of the proverb, “Where there is no vision people perish” into focus. Absent a “new birth of freedom,” precisely what this proverb predicted would come to pass—government of the people, by the people and for the people would “perish from the earth.” While the concept of *vision* may appear abstract, the tangible outcome from its lack is undeniable—peoples and nations perish.

Thankfully, there is a spiritual antidote to a lack of *vision* that causes people to perish. It is found in an iconic New Testament scripture: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him *should not perish* but have everlasting life” (**John 3:16**, emphasis added).

When we unpack the promise of this scripture and mesh it with the meaning of the proverb, we see a compelling vision emerge—*ultimate vision*.

First, the proverb tells us lack of vision causes people to perish. Second, and by contrast, John promises us that we “should not perish”—predicated on actionable and authentic belief.

This begs the question: “What is the antidote that powers the promise to not perish?” Is it our active belief, or is it the love of God described by John? Both are factors, but not the antidote itself. Both describe what was done, but not what was given. God loves; we believe; but it is the “only begotten Son” who was given to inoculate us against the enemy of death and more importantly, impart us with everlasting life.

If then the Son was given so that we would not perish and if *vision* is who we are to become, it follows that the *ultimate vision* is to be like Him.

This ultimate *existential vision to be like Him* was not lost on the apostles of the New Testament. In fact, it empowered who they were and became the defining directive that informed what they did in their lives.

John writes in his epistle to the Church that “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (**1 John 3:2**). Paul declares in his discourse on the promise of the resurrection that just “as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” (**1 Corinthians 15:49**). Peter testifies that they “did not follow cunningly devised fables,” but rather they made known what both Peter and John encountered in vision on the holy mountain of transfiguration (**2 Peter 1:16-18**).

The *vision* of being like Him speaks to both present and future realities. We cannot claim, as some do, to be like Him while living a lifestyle contrary to what He did. We are after all, as are all humans, created in the image of God. We bear His image, whether we acknowledge it or not. When we bear His image responsibly we bring honor to God. When we choose a life contrary to His law we defile His image and dishonor His Name.

The future reality of *being like Him in glory* takes on dimensions that defy human comprehension as John himself admitted: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be.” Despite admitting the limits of human comprehension, John follows this statement with a powerful declaration: “But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is” (**1 John 3:2**).

Johann Albrecht Bengel, a highly regarded Greek scholar, comments that John’s description of the children of God “suggests something unspeakable, contained in the likeness of God, which so exalts the sons of God, that they become as it were gods” (Gnomon of the New Testament, 1742, Vol. 5)

Bengel’s words bring into focus God’s ultimate vision of *being like Him*—we will not be second rate children of God, rather we will be “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (**Romans 8:17**). This is what God envisioned from the beginning when He said, “Let Us make man in Our image according to Our likeness” (**Genesis 1:26**).

God created Man in His image and commanded him to “be fruitful and multiply” thereby starting a reproductive process that ultimately enables Him to “bring many sons to glory” (**Genesis 1:28; Hebrews 2:10**).

First, with the “man of dust” in the form of the “first man Adam” (**1 Corinthians 15:45, 48**); second, through those begotten of His Spirit who “walk in newness of life”; and finally by transformation to spirit in “the twinkling of eye, at the last trump,” when His children will “put on immortality” and inherit everlasting life (**Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 15:52, 54, KJV**).

That *vision* is as sure today as it was when the apostles embraced it—it is just much closer to becoming a reality. In the next part of these series we will define from the Bible the *Image of the Heavenly Man*.



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