

# “Vision of the Kingdom”

By Warren Zehrung – October 12, 2011

Brethren, we are on the Opening Night of the Feast here to picture the Feast of Tabernacles, and all that that means.

The Kingdom of God is going to be a time when everything that we see and know of today, is going to be so entirely different that we would hardly believe it if it were shown to us.

God reveals Himself to us through His Word, through the scriptures and through the Bible. He also reveals His plan for mankind through the Bible. The world does not know the plan of God, but we are privileged to know it. God’s plan is extremely, extraordinarily great. It is huge, and it is beyond our human comprehension.

**Isaiah 9:7** Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

I want you to key in on the word “*increase*,” because that word does not do justice to the meaning of this verse. Maybe if you put “great” in front of it, then you would get a better understanding of what Isaiah is being inspired to write about. For those of you who know what a geometric progression is, that would be what this word means. The word ‘government’ is not a very good translation either. It can mean empire, the realm of God, administration of God, the domain of jurisdiction, or I think it would work if we would just say, “*of the tremendous increase of the Plan of God.*” Can you imagine something increasing and increasing and ever increasing, and not ceasing to increase? You go off the charts.

We do not have judgment in the world today. Can you picture the plan of God, with Jesus Christ ruling in justice and judgment for ever and ever? How can it be? Isaiah answered that, “*The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*” God is going to do this, not through physical means, not with bulldozers, but He will do it through His Spirit, just like the first couple of verses in the Bible when His Spirit moved upon the face of the deep (Genesis 1:2). This is something miraculous, and this is something that only God can do.

I want to expand on this word “increase” that we are talking about. I would like to have us grasp, even on physical terms, what this word means.

Let me use a story. I want you to key in on increase. Think of things growing with geometric progression; growing at an ever-increasing rate.

Once upon a time there was a very wealthy king who had a very beautiful daughter.

It was widely expected as she came to the age of getting married, that her dowry would be something fantastic, and something magnificent. So, naturally, all of the young men, all of the princes and all of knights in armor, wanted for this princess to be their wife. They also would not mind having that magnificent dowry. They realized that some lucky suitor would gain not only a beautiful princess, but a lot of money, and a lot of property, and everything that goes with becoming the husband of this princess at marriage.

Many princes and knights sought her hand in marriage, but because of the king's great wealth, each suitor demanded a king's ransom as a dowry. They told the king that they would marry his daughter if...

Those men courting the king's daughter came from far and wide, each seeking the hand of the princess. So a bidding war ensued that staggered the king's patience. He did not know where they were coming from, because they all wanted so much.

Many suitors expected vast amounts of gold, or half the kingdom, but one wise young nobleman made the king a proposition that the king was unable to refuse.

The young nobleman said, "I will settle for a handful of corn, and the land on which it is grown. Yes, that will be a suitable dowry for me – the land upon which it is planted and its increase for five years."

The king gladly accepted, and the young nobleman and the princess were married.

A young child was selected to reach into a bag of corn and come up with a handful of grain. The little child reached down and got as big a handful of corn as he could get. He put it on the table and they counted it, and there were 77 kernels of corn in the lad's hand.

And when they had been placed almost two feet apart, it took a little garden area 12 foot by 12 foot to plant the corn.

The young nobleman and the princess watered and tended the corn every day.

At the end of the first season, each of the 77 kernels had grown into a stalk, and each stalk of corn had grown three ears, and each ear of corn had 480 kernels on each cob. That comes to 1,440 kernels on each stalk. That is the way that things grow.

That meant that the second year their little garden had grown to 50 feet by 50 feet.

The third year's produce took 95 acres to plant the produce.

The fourth year it took 214 square miles of land for the corn.

The land and corn, at the end of five years, amounted to 308,000 square miles of land.

That is what that word **increase** means. What about when you talk about the increase of God's Kingdom?

**Psalms 72:16** There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains [that proliferates into abundance]; the fruit thereof shall shake [rustle in the wind] like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

When we think of the grass of the earth, we think about ever increasing numbers, by the millions and billions. An innumerable number of blades of grass is what is being spoken about here.

But please understand, when we are reading something like Psalm 72, we are not looking at corn or grass. God is not talking about grass, but He is talking about future children of God, and He is talking about the increase of His Kingdom. And as it pertains to those who are led by His Spirit, converted, and come out of the world. That is just an analogy, but we are speaking about the children of God. Not only being fruitful, but possessing the Spirit of God, and the fruits of God's Spirit. We have all heard sermons, and we know that the fruits of the Spirit are these, joy, love, peace, goodness and so forth. We say that we know that the fruits of the Spirit are something that we get.

I want to switch from corn to water. On the cover of the Feast bulletin, we have a beautiful river flowing in abundance. Our theme for this Feast this year is "Rivers of Living Water." Throughout the Feast, in the sermonettes and the sermons, we will be looking at the properties and attributes of water, as they can be applied to, and expounded on, as they relate to God's Holy Spirit. I am just going to touch some highlights on that a little bit tonight.

**Psalms 72:6** He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

There is a lot of that kind of "water" phraseology in the scriptures, and we are supposed to picture water in growth and in giving life. There are a lot of pictures like that that we will be touching on.

All through the Feast we are going to try to build on a concept to where we have a new and expanding understanding of God's Spirit. You might say that this is something that should have been covered a long time ago.

I was frankly astounded when, in the Worldwide Church of God, they began to teach the Trinity doctrine. People within the Church of God accepted the Trinity, because they did not know what God's Holy Spirit was. They quickly accepted that the Holy Spirit was a "he" and it was a third person of a Trinity, and things like that. We need to understand some things about God's Holy Spirit, and hopefully this Feast will change the way that we understand it. The Holy Spirit is God's nature, His characteristics, His love, His compassion, His healing, His power, His mercy and His goodness... The list goes on and on, about what God's Holy Spirit is like, what it is, what it does to us. I want to add something to our understanding.

Our challenge is to begin to grasp the spiritual truths contained in this concept of "living waters". That is the analogy that God gives us. We will see rivers of living water throughout the Feast, and on the Last Great Day. The Scriptures even say that God's Holy Spirit in us springs forth in the spiritual growth, thirty, sixty or a hundred fold (Mark 4:8, 20).

**Mark 4:20** "These are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."

But the seed planted in the good earth represents those who hear the Word, embrace it, and produce a harvest beyond their wildest dreams.

That spiritual growth is a geometric progression, and it grows greater and greater. Do we see this in the Church? Tomorrow, on the High Day, still the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, we will talk about God's Holy Spirit at work in us, and what it should be producing in us – the people of God. But tonight let us look at these analogies a little bit.

This Feast, each sermon, sermonette, split sermon and so forth, is going to help us to understand the diversity of God's Spirit. God's Spirit is not just like a blob, but it is the Life of God that we are putting on.

**Colossians 3:10** ...and have *put on* the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

We are to *put on* the image of God. We have heard that before, but let us tie that altogether. We are told that we are to be growing in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

Each year, brethren, we should not be repeating the same lesson, hearing the same sermon that we heard the year before, but we should be growing and learning something new. The things that we have learned, and the experiences that we have had in our lives, should help us to grow in grace and knowledge. We should understand things that we did not understand when we first came into God's Church. We should be correcting our consciousness, and correcting our knowledge base. We should be expanding our knowledge of what it says in the scriptures, and be *putting on* God.

Years ago, it was like that in the Church of God. Some of you might remember when the Church was growing at thirty percent a year, and it maintained that growth for quite a few years. I know a lot of people came along and said that it never grew at thirty percent. When trials and tribulations came, maybe it was not sustained. Thirty percent is like Mark said, thirty, sixty, and one hundred percent.

We had some tremendous growth in the Church of God, but what have these last ten or fifteen years been about? So many of our friends have been hurt, and so many have been scattered. People in God's church have been bewildered, and they have gone from organization to organization – corporation to corporation. Why is that happening in the Church of God? Why have so many of the brethren in God's Church been misused, abused, hurt, confused, baffled and perplexed? I imagine everyone of us, from the days of Worldwide, have been looking for a home, and looking for the truth. Many of us have been seeking something and we have desired to take hold of something. We want something permanent, and we are looking for that city that Abraham looked for (Hebrews 11:10). We desire to have **a vision of the Kingdom**. Every one of us felt sure that if we found it, we would know it and recognize it. We thought we had a hold of it when God first called us, and we began to come out of the world, and we wanted more truth. We knew that what we had been taught in the world was wrong and that the new truth was centered on the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments. That which we were seeking had a great part of its understanding based on the Holy Days, which we had never heard of before God called us. And it was based on the Plan of God. I did not know that God had a plan. I thought, like most people do, that when you die you go to heaven.

We were called out of the world, and we did our best to repent, forgive and believe. We were told by the ministry that one of the requirements to be baptized was to believe in Jesus Christ. We thought that we believed in Jesus Christ when we were in the world. At first, we were just learning, and we made every effort to come out of the world. We wanted to be right with God. And, for a little while, we felt that it was all coming together. We were able to find like-minded people, and we were all in one big corporate organization back then. We felt like we were one. We found people that thought like we

did, ate the things that we ate, and went to church the day that we did. We had been called into the Truth, and it was good!

We were preaching the Gospel to nearly every nation under the sun. It meant a lot to us that we were that big, and we were not just some kind of a small fringe group. It seemed like the Gospel was going to the entire world in great power.

I had the opportunity to travel widely when I was younger – to England, Jordan, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Alaska, Switzerland, Bahamas, Canada, Scotland, Austria, East and West Germany, New Zealand, Mexico, Hawaii, Israel, and Australia. No matter where I went, and if I was traveling at Feast time, I would walk into a group of like-minded people. They believed the same kind of things, read the same Scriptures, and they meant the same things.

I had **a vision of the Kingdom** that it was very near. I really thought that just as I had been called and believed, pretty soon everybody I knew would see how clear it was, and they would come in, and they would believe.

To me, in those days, it seemed as though the Church of God was moving mightily! I honestly believed and expected that the people of the United States would become converted, and then, other nations would convert when seeing how rich and powerful we were.

It was as though we were a mighty relentless glacier, of dense blue glacial ice, moving and cutting our way through the mountains of the earth. Glaciers grind everything in their way, and they cut out new valleys. Anything in their way was going to be mowed down, and I kind-of pictured the Church of God being like that. God was working, and we gave God the credit, and I just thought the Church was going to grow and grow.

Some of you have seen a massive glacier. Some glaciers are miles wide and they measure their rate of travel in feet per year. They are just barely going along, but their progression is sure and it is positive and they are headed for the sea. And to me that is the way that it seemed to be for the Church of God. We were the people of God, and we were headed for the Kingdom of God. We thought that we had the **vision of the Kingdom**.

A glacier is inert water, and lots of it, frozen and bound together. It is powerful and unstoppable.

During this Feast we are going to see water in many of its various forms. What I would like to do, and have you do during this Feast, is compare water to the multi-faceted attributes of God's Holy Spirit. This is going to call for an expansion of the concept of God's Holy Spirit in our minds, because sometimes we think that it is just there. But what is God's Holy Spirit? What are the attributes of it? Is it something that you can write on one sheet of paper? How well do you understand God's Spirit? When Jesus Christ said, "Out of His belly will flow rivers of living water," (John 7:37) what did He mean? He was not talking about water gushing out of His inward parts, but He was talking about something else. The Scripture goes on to tell us that it is talking about God's Spirit. So we need to understand what Jesus Christ was saying.

And for some of us, there was a cohesion and unity that lasted for some many years. I still have friends that extend back into the days of the Worldwide Church of God.

But what happened to us? We were this giant, powerful relentless glacier, but all of a sudden the ice began to melt under our feet. The Church was cracking up. Heresy had entered the Church, at the very top. It was catching people unawares, and it was destroying the Church. Wherever the pressure of heresy was applied, the glacier began to crumble. It was prophesied to happen, brethren.

**I Timothy 4:1** Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

And, like a glacier that shears off into ice-flows and icebergs that scatter on the tides and currents of a stormy sea, the Church of God shattered, and God's people were scattered. We lost contact with a lot of people. We were tossed and turned by every wind of doctrine, and perished in the sea, when they wavered and were scattered like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed (James 1:6).

**James 1:6** Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Some of us diligently did our utmost to hold the dissipating flows together, but we were weak in the face of this doctrinal diversity that hit and scattered God's people. There was something missing, and the cohesiveness that we thought was there was not there. There was something wrong. Men sought followings after themselves, and came up with strange doctrines. Few, it seemed, held the pure doctrine of Christ to be most sacred.

At that time it was a terrible time of hurt, and people were being disfellowshipped, and being put out of the Church for holding on to the truth of God. Different men put up banners of disunity. They asked people to join their corporate organizations and follow them. Each one would have some little different thing that he taught from the Truth.

It seemed that everyone lacked the internal compass that pointed "true". We did not know where to go, and we made false starts. We wanted something that pointed to the Kingdom of God, and that gave us the **vision of the Kingdom**. There was a blur of doctrinal diversity out there. Who among us had the vision of the Kingdom at that point?

**Ephesians 4:13** Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

We were going in the opposite direction, and we were crashing into diversity.

**Ephesians 4:14** That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

That is what happened to the Church of God, because of the lack of cohesion with the Spirit of God, and understanding what the Spirit of God was, and holding on to the doctrines of Jesus Christ.

**Ephesians 4:15** But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Brethren, can we speak the Truth in love? Can we live the Truth in love? Our Spirit must grow to become like Christ's Spirit.

**Romans 8:5** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

**Romans 8:14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

It is hard for us to discern who is led by God's Holy Spirit and who is not.

**Romans 8:16** The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, That is until we come to the point where we are one Spirit with God.

**I Corinthians 6:17** But he who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him.

Brethren, we are here this week looking for that vision, and looking forward to the Kingdom of God on earth. That is what the Feast of Tabernacles is really about. What we want to do is enhance that **vision of the Kingdom**.

I was having a good conversation with a friend of mine, who has had a long life in God's Church. I asked him what have these last fifteen to twenty years of the Church being scattered been about in the great scheme of things. As we look at Church history, we know what was going on in Acts, and what God was doing with the Church. We saw the Church grow, and we saw the Church fail. We saw persecution, and we saw scattering. We saw all of Asia die when Paul wrote that "*all of Asia has left me.*" (2 Timothy 1:15) Churches go through things like that. What about our time? What have these last fifteen or twenty years been about? What are we supposed to be doing? What are we supposed to be learning?

So I asked my long-time friend, "What has been the purpose of God's scattered church in these last few decades? What are we to learn from the trials and turmoil of all the division, control, false teachers, and the wrong doctrine that pervades so much of the Church, the people of God?"

And he said, "I do not know." And he paused and thought, "All I know is that some people grasp the **vision of the Kingdom** while others do not." I chose that for the title of this Opening Night sermon right then and there. I thought that was very deep and very profound. Some people grasp the vision of the Kingdom, while others do not.

Do you grasp the vision of the Kingdom of God? Do you have in your mind's eye a picture of what the Kingdom of God is? I am going to speak particularly and explicitly on this topic tomorrow.

Brethren, do you live now according to the rules of the Kingdom of God in your own life?

We are here, this week, looking forward to the Kingdom of God on earth, and that is what the Feast of Tabernacles is about.

Let me make this point clear, because sometimes I take these things for granted. When we see the phrase 'water' or 'living water' let us keep in mind that it is talking about God's Holy Spirit. When we read of "living water" in the Bible, let us make it abundantly clear that it is talking about eternal spiritual life. God's Spirit changes us. We need God's Holy Spirit to deal with others in a spirit of unity, love and cohesiveness. It was Jesus Christ who said this through Jeremiah:

**Jeremiah 2:13** For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Jesus Christ refers to Himself as "*the fountain of living waters.*" God's Spirit comes from God, and it comes through Christ. People are looking in the wrong place for God's Holy Spirit.

**Revelation 21:6** And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

This is talking about those of us who are looking for God's Spirit, not thirsty because we have not had a drink of water for a while.

In the same way that there is no life without water, there is no eternal life without God's Spirit.

I would like our young people that are taking notes, to start writing down some of the attributes of water. I would like you to picture the smallest drop that you can imagine, a little round drip of water. You have seen mist coming down, and if you could see it with a magnifying glass each one is a little drip of water. It all seems to be very much the same. It seems like there is no difference with one drop of water from another. I would like to point out that it is God who has chosen water to represent His Spirit. You might draw the conclusion that since every drop of water is just like every other little drop, then God's Holy Spirit is pretty much the same. There is not much diversity, not much difference, not many attributes that you can attribute to it and so forth.

Let me make a statement. God is calling many sons and daughters to glory, and every last person is special and unique, totally different from everybody else (Hebrews 2:10). None of us have the same background, none of us have been wired the same, and none of us have had the same experiences. There are no two of us that are alike. God is eventually going to have billions of people. So as mundane as all of these little water droplets seem, God has given water some very wonderful attributes.

I would like to explore that point for a moment, because it will help us to realize and understand what God means when He speaks of rivers of living water.

In Romans 1:19, the Bible talks about the people in the world being unaware of God. The world denies that there is a God. We live in a country where it has become (PC) politically correct to leave God out of absolutely everything. Paul had the same problem in his day, and he was talking about it here:

**Romans 1:19-20** ... because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

He is telling them that the knowledge of God is obvious, it is right in front of your eyes. We are talking about God's Spirit, and it is invisible, and nobody here has seen God's Spirit. The invisible things of God's nature, of His character, of His being, of His Spirit, His life, His mind, His thinking, and all of His attributes of compassion, love, mercy, and His power... What can we see looking at a droplet of water? They are all just alike??? God says that a droplet of water is like His Holy Spirit. We can see God's eternal power and His divinity by looking at things like a drop of water? It is kind of hard to imagine.

The Bible mentions droplets of dew, on the grass and on the leaves, thirty-five times.

It talks about hail, which is nothing but a droplet of water that is frozen solid, thirty-nine times.

It talks about mists coming up and watering the garden, or a fog, which is another form of water, three or four times.

Water is not monotonous at all. When you start looking at water it comes in a lot of different varieties, and a lot of different attributes.

Frost stays on the leaves, on the grass, or on the windows. It is just water, and it is mentioned seven times in the Bible.

Ice is mentioned at least four times. Job speaks of frozen lakes. That is water, too.

Why, when something is so mundane, so plain and as simple as water, does it have so many characteristics?

God talks about tears thirty-five times in the Bible. (They are mostly water.)

**Psalms 56:8** Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?

The Bible speaks about how a tree sucks up water, which is the sap of life.

**Psalms 104:16** The trees of the LORD are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted,

Water has capillary action and surface tension. Water has all kinds of properties with trace elements in it – it has conductivity. Water occurs in three different states: it can be liquid, it can be solid, and it can be gas or vapor.

The Bible talks about rain, at least eighty-seven times.

Water can be distilled, it can be still, it can be fresh water, it can be ocean water, it can be heavy water with extra hydrogen, or it can be water in long molecules. It is a primary ingredient of so many things. The Bible tells us that the life is in the blood, and so many compounds or solutions are based on water. With pressure it drives steam turbines, and without pressure it evaporates. In some conditions water sublimates and goes from a solid to a gas without being in a liquid state.

The Bible talks about being baptized in water – water being the watery grave.

Jesus Christ took water and He changed it into wine. He takes something as simple as water, and He starts doing something with it.

The Bible speaks of storms thirteen times. Rivers are mentioned two-hundred and twenty-three times. Clouds, which are water droplets, are mentioned one-hundred and forty-three times. And, it is all just water! It freezes, boils, evaporates, and condenses. Water cleanses, and water has power! Water can be super-heated.

God is showing what He is like by the things that are made – in this case, water. Why would He make water have such a multitude of diverse attributes? If water just simply stayed water, it seems like that would be good enough for most of us. But water does a

host of different things. I want you to hop, skip and jump, because God's Holy Spirit is very diverse. In every message this Feast, we will hear of the diversity and the workings of God's Holy Spirit. The Scriptures speak about the diversity of God's Spirit, in I Corinthians 12, and we might get to some of that.

The Bible speaks of springs of water, thirty-four times. Wells of water are mentioned forty-nine times. The men speaking at the Feast this year are going to bring up a lot of these.

Water gives life to the desert. Snow is mentioned thirty-five times. Snow is nothing but a droplet of water frozen. But, as you know, there is wet snow, there is dry snow, and there is packed snow – all kinds of snow conditions – still only water!

Here is a point that I would like you to think about, and you young people too:

Snowflakes are beautiful and unique. Have you ever heard it said that there are no two snowflakes alike? How many snowflakes are there? Think of a continent covered with snowflakes ever so deep, and no two are alike. Then relate that to humanity, none of us are alike. Yet God is going to pour out His Spirit on us, and His Spirit is going to have a different effect, and it is going to have different fruits, different gifts in every one of us. God likes diversity, and He shows that to us. No two people are alike, like no two snowflakes are alike. All snowflakes have six points, and they are all water, but yet they are not any alike. If it snowed for a hundred years, there still would not be two snowflakes alike. It is like two people are never alike. That is important to God, and that means that every life, every human being that ever lived, living now, or will live, is important to God.

It is going to take this entire Feast, for us to even begin to explore these concepts about God's Holy Spirit. This Feast of Tabernacles is given to us by God, and it is very important for the express purpose that we might be able to begin to see the coming Kingdom of God on earth. To be able to grasp the **vision of what the Kingdom of God** is like, but not just the physical part. I think for so many years we would go to the Feast, and think about what it was like in the Garden of Eden. It is not about when all of the beautiful birds come back, and when all of the animals are tame, that too is part of the physical that points to the spiritual. The love, unity, cohesiveness and the togetherness, and the oneness with Jesus Christ is going to be magnificent. I do not think that we hardly grasp that yet. God's Spirit is so diverse and it is so much. God is love, and we have to grow into that.

Let us begin to comprehend the inestimable, divine spiritual gifts that God is going to bestow on all of these different people. We will talk about the great resurrection on the Last Great Day. We will have billions of people coming up out of the grave – to live again. And it talks in Ezekiel 37 of God's Spirit entering into them. What will they all become? They will all be individuals too, with differing gifts.

**Joel 2:28** "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

It talks about grace upon ever increasing grace.

**John 1:16** ...gifts upon ever increasing gifts of God's Spirit.

The point that I am trying to make about this water, and I might be belaboring it, but in the same way that we see a multiplicity of attributes in water, the workings of God's Holy Spirit are infinitely more diverse. Because God's Holy Spirit is much more than just a droplet of water, it is the power of God, and the mind of God. We talked about increase of the Plan of God and of His Kingdom, and His government, and of His realm, there will be no end. Can we begin to grasp the **vision of the Kingdom**? That is what we are here for this week.

I am going to close with this one point, because I have heard this from so many people, and I have been guilty of it myself in the Church of God. We have this concept that when we look at the fruit of the Spirit, we know that 'He that sows of the Spirit reaps of the Spirit, life everlasting' (Galatians 6:8). We say that, over and over again about eternal life. We want to have God's Spirit, joy, peace, long suffering, goodness... We say that we want to have those fruits, and we would like to be encouraging, we would like to forgive, we would like to be joyful, and we would like to be loving... That is not what this verse is saying. Let me use this analogy, and it is almost a grade school analogy:

Brethren, do we understand that a small acorn that falls into the ground, and is nourished with the water and the sun, turns into a mighty oak tree. Why does it do that? The acorn is the fruit of the oak tree, and it turns into an oak tree. In the same way that if we have the fruits of God's Holy Spirit, *we turn into God*. That is the **vision of the Kingdom** that we are to grasp. John says that we will be like Him. We will not be like us, and kind-of like God, but we are going to *be like Him*. We are going to put off the old, and *put on* the new.

When we possess the fruit of God, His Spirit, we will grow up unto God.

God's Spirit is who God is, and God's Spirit is what God is.

The fruit of the Spirit is what we *put on* if we are to become like God.

As we look into Corinthians 12, try to look at it with the context in mind of *becoming like God*, rather than getting these gifts for our own use.

**1 Corinthians 12:1,4** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

Think of the diversities of God's Holy Spirit, and come up with a number, one of those 'gazillion' kind of numbers, and it has to be more than the snowflakes that cover a continent. We know that God's growth, and His realm, and of the plan of God has no end. It grows and grows like those kernels of corn. So when it says that there are diversities, think big: widespread, incredible, magnificent, or whatever words you can think of. In the past we have heard that there are twelve or sixteen fruits. Brethren, there *is no end* to the diversities of the gifts.

**1 Corinthians 12:5-6** There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

God does not want us all marching like a bunch of troops that are indistinguishable from one another. God loves diversity. This is something else that we see when we look at the creation.

**1 Corinthians 12:7** But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all (withal):

You do not just say that you know the way to the Kingdom, or **I have a vision of the Kingdom** and I am not going to tell anybody else. I will just save myself, and maybe a couple of my buddies, but I do not want all those crowds getting in there. That is not the way that God looks at it. God is welcoming all of us. We are a small flock right now, and our brothers and sisters in other groups, some who understand and some who do not understand the unity of the Spirit. God is welcoming all of us, because the Spirit is given to every man to profit everybody. This is what 'withal' means, to profit everybody else. If you hoard God's gift, then you are misusing it, and it will be taken away.

**I Corinthians 12:8-10** ...for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

The list of Spiritual gifts is endless... Some people have bilingual capabilities, and they have the gift of tongues. Some people want these mysterious, miraculous kinds of gifts of healing and speaking in tongues just to come out of the blue for no use at all. That is not what it was about. God was using languages, healings and gifts of the Spirit to profit the whole church. Many were given the words of wisdom to profit everybody – the word of knowledge to profit everybody. Everybody does not have the same gift. But the gift that we have must be used to help everybody else.

Let us say that there were two people that were able to discern spirits, or two people that were able to heal, do we say, 'Let us see who can be in charge of who,' or 'You cannot use your healing gift'. God does not want it shutting down, but He wants it expanding and multiplying. God would be the one who coined the phrase 'the more the merrier,' because He is the one who says that of the increase of His Kingdom there is no end.

**I Corinthians 12:11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

God decides who He is going to give His Spirit to, and who it is going to help.

So brethren, that is what I wanted to touch on tonight. I wanted to talk about God's Holy Spirit, and for us to be able to get a little grasp of it. Maybe I have walked on a few of the messages that the men are going to be giving. That is okay, we can hear it again and drive it home, so that we will all understand it. This is a gift from God's Holy Spirit, and we have a theme, "Rivers of Living Water," and we are going to try to milk it for all it is worth.

Let us understand that God's Spirit is something that is ubiquitous, it is everywhere, and it is God in action in us. It is not just for show, but the Plan of God will grow.

Brethren, can you grasp the **vision of the Kingdom**?

WZ/pp/sl