



The Alpha and Omega —*A Vision for Eternity*—

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The Church is not an institution. The Church is the Bride of Christ, a living organism, a living-breathing thing. Whenever you write the word Church in the English language it is supposed to be capitalized just like your name is capitalized; you may not have known why. When you make reference to God, whether it is a pronoun or not, it is still capitalized. If you make reference to the Church, it should be capitalized as well.

Introduction

Though the Church is not an institution, institutions are still really wonderful in order to get things done. I've been part of many institutions, a part of the VA (Veterans Administration) for 27 years. I started out as a lowly lab-tech. The Lord just kept promoting me to one position after another until I was in charge of Manage-Care. So I was Administrative Director of Manage-Care for three of the largest hospitals in New York State including Peekskill, which was a psychiatric hospital. I was also the member of 23 different committees, as I recall, and chairman of seven. During that time I knew what it was like to give command orders. I knew what it was like to have a committee meeting and how to manipulate people really well. (How else do you think you get there?!)

I had some successes which I was very proud the Lord used me in. One was reorganizing the whole ministry to New York City homeless Vets. They were just shipped off to places and nobody cared about them. They usually had

diagnoses which may or may not have been appropriate. They may have needed to be re-diagnosed as real human beings and treated that way. I was very proud of that. I actually had to meet with psychiatrists from all over New York State, some of the top psychologists. At one point I had around 65 of them in a penthouse room. Having that many psychologists and psychiatrists in a room is like herding cats! It is impossible to do. Just getting them to show up, to begin with, was hard because they were used to doing things *quite on their own*.

So how do you organize that? What do you do? You would administrate. You would have committee meetings. You would have a vision; you have a mission; you have all these statements and ground rules, organization. By the way most of the time, if not all, “Roberts Rules of Order” are thrown out the window. It is interesting that people think of that as Holy Ground, the ultimate administration. It actually is not required in New York State Law.

In Federal law, when Ronald Reagan became president, he passed the Paperwork Reduction Act. Does anyone remember that? Do you know what it meant? It meant you didn’t have to use a pen any more; you could use a pencil or crayon or anything that worked. Being *workable* became a key word or phrase. So you no longer needed lawyers to draw up your document. You could use plain English. That was all part of the Paperwork Reduction Act. That revolutionized the government service for a couple of weeks . . . then it drifted back into the administrative pole of manipulating people. In fact as I was studying to get my Masters in Business Degree, one of the first tenets of that degree was, “*If you don’t want to manipulate people, you are in the wrong position.*”

I thought, “*Wow. I don’t want to manipulate people.*” If you think about it, if you come to somebody as an evangelist, to someone who does not know Christ, you are going to try to make him see your point of view, manipulate their mind to your point of view that God is God—man is not God. That is a good starting point.

After all that particular time I became an administrator for eleven surgeons, their Financial Officer, and so forth and so on. All that administration, I really counted as garbage and filthy rags because what really mattered is what people thought and think about me and of themselves and of God (actually in the reverse order). The more we know of God, the more we actually find ourselves, our own personalities of who we are. We don’t have to “find ourselves.”

Remember in the ‘70’s all the gals wanted to re-invent who women were and to “find themselves”. That was the key phrase. Finding yourself is like losing yourself as we see in the gospel of Luke. If you are out to identify yourself, you are on the wrong path. You actually find your identity as you more and more know Christ! That is because He created you as a very unique individual. Look at yourselves. Nobody here is the same . . . your mouth, your nose, your eyes, your eyebrows—and they are constantly changing.

I didn’t used to like “growing old.” There are some good things about it. You get to have a laugh once in a while. We know that in the waters of Baptism

we get to bury the “old man.” So I got up this morning, looking in the mirror and said, “*I thought I buried you!*”

Well Jesus says in Matthew chapter eight, verse 20:

20 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

He didn’t have a house that He could go to where He knew He would sleep that night. He said, “*I do what I see the Father doing.*” He didn’t go to a committee. He could have done that. He could have called the twelve disciples together and said, “*You know what? Nathaniel, I think you would be really good at Foreign Ministries. Peter, I think you would be really good for advertising.*” There would be a committee for almost everything made up of the seventy disciples that were close and they could have all that committee government thinking, “*By the way, we need to have a model church.*”

That is the way I would think as the administrator for the Veteran’s administration . . . When you set up a clinic, what do we have to do? We have to advertise. We have to be there. We have to organize. We have to make sure that there are doctors and nurses, computers, etc. etc. All of that has to be done. But Jesus didn’t do that did He? There *were* however administrators with Him.

The Vision: What is the Will of God?

We can see this when Jesus answered poor Nicodemus, and I’m sure he was a good administrator. Think about who he was, right there in the midst of the administration; he knew what was going on.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

This kingdom that Jesus is building isn’t based on institutions and non-living things. It isn’t based on ideas and committees. It isn’t based on a five-year plan. Those may all exist but that is not the **focus**. When you do have a five-year plan be prepared to give it up. I have plans day-to-day. But the Lord might say, “*That is not going to happen today. Try something else. Try this.*” Then God sets before me things I should do.

Again Jesus says,

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

What is flesh? Flesh is what we personally think has to be done for ourselves, for our group, for those we love. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There is something else that God wants. Think about what the Lord prophesied today. He wants us to be soldiers; be ready for war. And yet all of the songs we sang were about the presence of the Lord. Did you notice that?! The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but they are mighty for the destructions of strong-

holds. We do have a few strongholds around. Some of it is right here in you and me.

John 3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

This is a presentation that there is a lack of distinct knowledge of what is going to happen tomorrow. And yet most of the News we watch is about what is going to happen tomorrow, the next variant from South Africa, etc. So the wind is blowing and we need to be aware of what God is doing. And so we focus on His presence. How can we pray if we are not in His presence? If we pray and we are not in His presence, we are going to pray things that are just crazy according to the Kingdom of God. But if we are in His presence and we understand and discern it, then we can pray rightly, the will of God.

What is the will of the Father?

That brings me to the text: What is the will of God? Some people say there is a passive will of God, a perfect will of God, whatever. Then they end up saying they don't know. We pray that we will discern His will. At the very least shouldn't the Church, His Bride, want to know what the Bridegroom is doing? At present, the organized Church is doing a lot of things the Bridegroom never talked about. Here we have organization but it is not our focus. It is not what we are about. Rather it is about our Father, hearing His voice. It all comes back to relationship. The Bride has relationship with the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom introduces us to the Father. There is a special relationship each one of us has to know with the Father.

Matthew 6: 9 Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

- First, acknowledge who He is. Declare it. He is our Father in Heaven, not on earth, in Heaven where all things are done according to His word.

*10 Your Kingdom come. **Your will be done** on earth as it is in Heaven.*

- Think about that for a while. How are things done in Heaven? We probably don't know. We could study astronomy for a long, long time, and not really understand it. Gravity waves sent out by every particle of matter and energy and yet what makes it happen?? What is it really all about? Scientists are still trying to figure it all out. They study black holes where light bends and tries to leave. It bends around and goes back into the black hole. Try to understand that. Some things are not understandable. But it was from the mouth of God that these things were done.

Your will be done as it is in Heaven according to the will of God.

- So we are going to assume right now that all things in Heaven are done according to the will of God, the planets, stars, everything. That is how astronomers in earlier days made their living. Astronomers did astrology on the side. They thought, "*Well the stars are in perfect order so if you*

were born under a certain star in a certain constellation it was really good.” So astronomers would find out exactly where these good stars were, where these planets were on the exact hour of the day of your birth. They would go to the kings and queens of Europe and sell their wares as “science” where as it was just man’s astrology. Man takes something of God and makes it his own. Deliver us, O God from that.

This Kingdom does not belong to us; **it belongs to the King**. Let us take that in. This is the vision, the Will of God; now let me give you the Mission Statement. What was Jesus’ mission?

Jesus’ Mission Statement

Luke 4:16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. 17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written (Isaiah 61:1):

*18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To #1 **preach the gospel to the poor**; He has sent Me to #2 **heal the broken-hearted**, To proclaim #3 **liberty to the captives** And recovery of #4 **sight to the blind**, To set at #5 **liberty those who are oppressed**; 19 To #6 **proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.**”*

As I referred about “days” in the Kingdom of God, they are all the same; the *acceptable* year of the Lord is now. It is tomorrow. It is the next day. What does the acceptable year of the Lord mean? It means the “year of Jubilee,” a year when all debts are forgiven. Yay. Every day for us is now! I opened up the bedroom curtains this morning. Snow was staring me right in the face. The hemlocks were picking up every flake they could possibly pick up and the scripture came to me, “*Tough your sin be as scarlet, they will be white as snow.*” I get so excited at the first snow of the year; I’m like a little kid. I see the Lord’s Mission Statement before my eyes. Let’s not lose site of what those things are. It is about good things happening to us, God’s people and those he has sent us to, the world. God so loved the world . . . that He gave His Son for this mission, to bring the good news to the brokenhearted, the gospel, set the captives free, site to the blind, etc. I like that because Jesus isn’t just talking about real eyesight. He’s talking about a blindness that can happen deep within our soul, the one that plagues us the most.

You are blind because of all the old stories you’ve been telling yourself your whole life long. Stop relying upon them! Many are true but not all. It is time to say, “*Lord, what do you think? What really happened here? What is the truth?*” Jesus says truth is not just wandering around. He says, “*I am the truth.*” The truth is Jesus. It is not found any where else. “*I am the Way and the Life. And this Life is the light of men.*” What a statement. That is a re-posting of the Vision so to speak.

The Holy Spirit versus Planning

(the Ground Rules of what Church planning should really be)

What Jesus did NOT do was to promote His ministry. He could have said here is the Mission Statement, here is the Vision. These are the Ground Rules for planning a Church. There are things that I could think of and things that other elders have thought about throughout the Millennia. In the end, all of those things will die except those that purpose from the eternal work of God and that is in your *heart*, in the *heart* of men and women that are called to Him. We don't need a strategy, a tactical operations director. We need God.

John 7:17 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.

- Jesus wasn't without wisdom. Just because you don't have a day-to-day or a five-year plan doesn't mean you act without wisdom. Jesus was very, very smart.

2 Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. 3 His brothers therefore said to Him, . . .

- His brothers represent the administration here.

. . . "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

- Why? You have a ministry. You need to get out there, show it at the Tabernacle of the Feast and this is the place to do it! If there is ever a time, this is it.

5 For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

- They didn't **trust** Him to make it happen. If they had, they would have asked themselves, "*Well, what is God doing? What is God saying to You? What is Your Father saying?*"

6 Then Jesus said to them (Oh dear administrators of My life), "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.

- Isn't that what you hear today? Always be ready! Be at the forefront! When I was running for office (which I did once and I'll never do it again) they would say, "*You need to be ready. Get your mission statement. Have them on a 3x5 card, right there.*" So if you forgot it, you could read it. Well that's not what Jesus was doing.

"My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready . . .

- You are always ready. He switches from tactical to what it is really all about.

*7 The world cannot **hate** you, but it **hates** Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.*

- So Jesus was about opening up the eyes of the blind just so they could see evil. Did His brothers forget that part? He was going to be disliked. *"Maybe you don't want to expose Yourself so much?!"*

8 You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come." 9 When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.

- Later on in that chapter He does go up in secret, but here He was trying to make a point, that it is not according to the world's standards. His ministry is NOT according to the world's standards. He only does what He sees the Father doing.

Humility

Another thing which must always be in the forefront of the Bride, the Church and those who administrate, is *humility*. You see I still think there should be administration but it has to be with these "filters." Humility. God has been speaking to us about that already, regarding what we should be doing. He says, *"The door to whatever you are going to be doing, the header above that door says 'Humility.'"* You had better have it in place or know how to get it.

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

- So He is saying, *"If there is any plan at all to get your mission done, so your vision statement can be done, you should really be of one mind!"*

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, . . .

- Believe me I have seen selfish ambition in the Church. I know the outcome of that if it isn't given over to the Lord. It is not fun. It is not a good thing.

. . . but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

- Something that is impossible to do. However you can in Christ. Christ can consider someone more important than yourself. Would you die for somebody else? Jesus did. If He gave you the grace to do it, you could also.

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- In fact I would go a little bit further than that. I would say, *"Don't look out for your own interest and go the other way if at all possible."* When we had home-groups on New Paltz campus, we always had a question about what day of the week we should have those meetings. I have always liked Wednesdays but if there was a choice, a tie vote, I would purposely avoid my own choice. Others contradicted me. They'd say, *"You shouldn't do that. If it is an even vote, your vote counts."* I'd say, *"Oh no because it says right here, 'Don't go after your own interest.'"*

- I was never disappointed by my choices by not going my own way. It always brought life.

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, . . .

- He was saying to His brothers, *“This isn’t the time to make My mark in the world.”*

. . . taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

- I would choose another way, maybe an overdose of drugs or something. I don’t know but *not* nailed to the cross! Public humiliation if nothing else.

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, . . .

- Who did it? **God!** God is behind what He is doing, His vision and mission statement. It has to be God and God alone. Think about what is happening 2000 years ago. How could this movement possibly be alive today without God? Well it couldn’t. This is an impossible thing for us to be meeting here this morning, 2021 and yet, here we are . . . in love with our Lord Jesus and His presence, hearing His voice, being Spirit led, being taken in by the Holy Spirit. This is nice . . . that every knee shall bow, those in heaven and those on the earth.

10 . . . that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, to the glory of God the Father.

- That means that everybody even those who did not know Him. Some day they will have to say, *“Well. He was Lord.”*

Now the temptation is to look at the world and the situations that are going on; look at the organized church, the institutional church, all institutions and say, *“This is all crazy! What can I do?”* The idea might come to you, *“Well you can join government service and do whatever you can do . . . ”* The idea might come to you that you could vote and other things . . . The thing that comes to my mind is, when I wake up in the middle of the night, **“Don’t get upset.”** If it is 3 am in the morning and the Lord wakes me up, it is a time to **pray**. So I get up and go into another room and pray, then another room and pray. I prayed for all the senior citizens in the US and in this room that we would not lose hope.

Summary

After Being Led by the Spirit, Then What?

—Focus on the Outcome—

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

- So we may be in administration and doing administrative things, thinking about strategy, etc. but our hope should be held without wavering. Do you know why? Because it is worth it.

C.S. Lewis said in “Lord of the Rings,” through Samwise, one of his characters after Mr. Frodo said to him, “*Why should we bother? Why should we continue?*” Samwise answered, “*Well, Mr. Frodo, because whatever good is in the world we should cherish that and go forward with that.*” Isn’t that good? C.S. Lewis was a wonderful Christian brother. So he would like to put his doctrine in the mouth of his characters.

Confession of our Hope without Wavering

What is your confession this morning? What do you talk to yourself about in the mirror in the morning? You say to yourself, “*I thought you (the old you) was dead?*” But now a new you is coming forth! Every day is a new day for those who are in Christ Jesus! Even if it is your last day on earth, it is going to be a new day. It will become an interesting day for you! But I am focused not on what God is doing right here and now (though I love it). I am also focused on the outcome of all the things He is **going** to do. We find that:

Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and new earth, . . .

- Wow, now that is a prophetic word! It doesn’t get further out than that.

. . . for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away . . .

- That’s what everybody is worried about, global earth and global climate change.

Also there was no more sea. . .

- So if you like the beach, you are without any hope.

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . .

- The Bride of Christ, not an institution but a living, breathing thing.

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying . . .

- A loud one, not a timid, cowardly voice.

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, . . .

- With men. That’s where God wants to be!

and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

- He will be with them no matter what the organized church does. No matter what the government does. No matter what evil does. No matter how dark it gets, this will happen! **This is the outcome.** God Himself will be with them and be their God, no other. We have a lot of other things that distract us now but not then!

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

- This is so nice. Want to stay here for a while? Every single tear from our eyes. I don't know how He is going to do that. What does that mean? Where there is sadness, it will be long gone. There will be no more Death! No more sorrow, nor crying, no pain. Whew. The former things have passed away. How much better can it be?!

It can be so; pay attention to this:

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

- I used to think that would be the end. Everything will be new. We don't know what is going to happen after that but it is not true . . .

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. . .

- Here's what is going to happen **after** all things are new,

. . . I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, . . .

- Wow. That's enough but yet **there is more!**

. . . and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

- The Father's end goal is not just to make all things new. The end goal is not to wipe away all tears. His end goal is to be your Dad! You are called "Children of God in the Spirit." In Romans chapter eight, *you are called Children of God!* That is what all Creation is waiting to hear. The end result of what our Father God was after **from the very beginning**, that relationship, Father and son, Father and daughter. Wow. That makes it worth it doesn't it?

Now we can look at the darkness that is in the world, the omicron virus, the newest strain of the Pandemic. This is not the end. I was reading that it is a milder strain of the Covid 19 disease anyway. It doesn't matter. God is in charge. He is in charge of your life and as a Christian brother and sister, no one can take away a day or a second of your life except for One, and that is the Father in Heaven who has planned it from the very beginning, when He calls you home.

Wow. What is that song? "*When I wake up in Heaven I am just going say Hallelujah. Jesus is my God. Jesus my only Salvation, the One who with His Spirit and the Father in Heaven, that Oneness will be mine forevermore*" because we will be married to Him! We will have a Fellowship like we have never dreamed of. *Who knows what God has for us after all that?!* It really doesn't matter.

I was interested to find that Jesus very rarely talked about "End Times." He did but when He talked about it, He would say, "*I'm going to a place where I*

have prepared many mansions.” He could have had a committee describe all of that, but He didn’t. He could have had all the prophets lined up and say what those mansions are. But He said, *“I’m going to the Father.”* It didn’t matter to Him what mansion He Himself was going to sit at. He already knew that there was going to be a Bride and a Bridegroom, a great time at the welcome table in Heaven.

Isn’t it going to be good!? The Resurrection, by the way, is an interesting concept. Why was it so popular in Jesus’ day and still popular even now? It is because the Resurrection talks about who you are bodily in a glorified body in Heaven. Now I cannot explain that. Many say that is ridiculous. It cannot be true. However it is; that is what happened when Jesus was resurrected from the dead. He had a glorified body. You are going to have one also. I wouldn’t be surprised if your body looks a lot like you do now. Peter and John had a revelation of those who were raised from the dead on the day on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah. Remember? I couldn’t recognize Moses since I never saw him. But somehow they did. So we are going to recognize one another. That’s going to be good.

The Ultimate End is Relationship

Now I have a “coffee list,” people I want to have coffee with when I get to Heaven. It used to always start with Isaiah’s mom. But there are people that I know and love that have already gone to Heaven. I’m going to love just sitting down and talking with them, people from my high school days, even though I now know they are miles away from me and their lives are so separate from mine yet I know they love the Lord. I hear what they are saying to me on Facebook. I am going to love and enjoy having coffee with them too. It may not be coffee but it is going to be good stuff.

Isn’t that good?! That’s why it is worth what we are doing, making friends of one another in our fellowship. That’s why it is worth making friends even of those in the world, to bring forth the goodness of God in our midst and around us. We may not always see the outcomes but there are some that are going to be seriously good. That is why Frodo and Samwise couldn’t *see* the outcomes when they were in Mordor and seeing the fire before them said, *“How is this thing going to happen?”* But it did. It was a good outcome, a time and a date which they predicted they wouldn’t remember, the fires of Mordor and what was happening in C.S. Lewis’ story.

I believe that there will be a time when Covid-19 will be a distant memory, hardly worth remembering. I used to criticize my dad and my father’s generation for not hugging us so much. But they all grew up with Scarlet Fever. Many of their siblings died of Scarlet Fever. So we were taught not to hug. This is a distant memory most have forgotten. So when this latest plague comes back, the enemy’s latest scheme, how could we not remember? Throughout history the enemy has brought plagues upon human beings. But it is not our Father’s de-

sire to do that. It is God's desire to bring forth the church, the bride of Christ focused on the will of God and the Kingdom. Amen.

So let's pray: *Father, we thank You that we can call You **Father**. We can say, "**Dad**, we need your help." Because you know we don't know. What we think we know, we don't. What we are "sure" of we are really only partially sure. But we know from the scriptures that You have given to us, they are so true, faithful and true.*

*Father wants to write those things on our **heart** because the things written on paper can disappear. They exist only for a while; but He writes them on our hearts so we cannot forget how faithful He is to us. What a loving God You are to us; that Your presence is the most important thing to us. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nothing can separate us from Your love, O God. Circumstances, disease, trials, other things. Nothing! We thank You for coming to us through the Holy Spirit being poured out so wonderfully, bringing back "Singing in Tongues," bringing back these songs that we have words for that are so wonderful to feed the Holy Spirit within us so that we can lift up a shield of faith, so that we can draw the sword of our salvation which is Word of God. So that we can be effective in our prayers for the other saints and for those in the world who have no hope before them.*

Lord, I believe that in this day and in this hour, even those who have NO hope . . . "Bring them right in!" We will say, "Where did these come from?" And it will be an awesome thing. It will be miraculous just like You said You were going to do. You said You were going to open the sight of not those who were partially blind, but rather, those who are totally and completely blind in the Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.