

8. Seeing the Invisible

Biblical material: Isa. 40:27-31, John 14:1-14, Rom. 8:28-39, Eph. 1:18-23.

Quotes

- Some things have to be believed to be seen. *Ralph Hodgson*
- I don't have the evidence to prove that God doesn't exist, but I so strongly suspect that he doesn't that I don't want to waste my time. *Isaac Asimov*
- If you want to get together in any exclusive situation and have people love you, fine—but to hang all this desperate sociology on the idea of The Cloud-Guy who has The Big Book, who knows if you've been bad or good—and CARES about any of it—to hang it all on that, folks, is the chimpanzee part of the brain working. *Frank Zappa*
- I'm not a slave to a god that doesn't exist. *Marilyn Manson*
- The no-mind not-thinks non-thoughts about no-things. *Buddha*

Questions

Is the desire to see beyond the immediate just wish fulfillment? How do we convince others that we are not just dreaming when we speak of spiritual things? How can you really “see the invisible”? How can we stress this invisible spiritual world without becoming vague and mystical? How can such a world seem relevant to our very real world?

Discussion/ Comment

Read 2 Kings 6:1-17. What does this tell us about how we need to see? The spiritual world and the cosmic conflict is in a sense more “real” than the physical reality we experience. Yet how to share this in ways that make sense with others?

Think of how God meets people as the Bible records. The revelation of God is called a “theophany” - and is always associated with life-changing experiences [transfiguration]. Like Abraham to whom God appeared (see Genesis 12:7) and led him out of the satisfied comfort of his country, his people and his family to a new land. A vision of what was to be, of what Abraham was to become—even needing a name change! God was Abraham's vision - the only guarantee of a future as he and his family took their first steps on their journey to Canaan. *That's* the kind of vision God seeks to provide - a vision that inspires to trusting action based on the promises of God.

Like Jacob to whom God appeared in a dream—the vision of the stairway to heaven. The image of the close connection of heaven and earth is vital. It shows how close God and His kingdom is to each of us. How comforting that was to lonely Jacob, on the run from home, sleeping under the stars in an unfamiliar place.

But more important than this, much, much more important is the statement, “There above it stood the Lord” (Genesis 28:13, NIV). And God goes on to give content to the vision: “I will be with you and will watch over you wherever you go...” (28:15, NIV). That's the inspiration - not just the stairway, not just the angels, but the assured presence and guidance of God. The heart of Jacob's vision is a vision of God - God as He truly is. For only by seeing God in all His true nature and reality can we have a sure and certain vision, a vision that will see us through.

For Jacob saw God face to face (Genesis 32:30, NIV), he experienced God and knew Him, whom to know *is life eternal*. Face to face.

The vision of God is essential. But to have that vision without experiencing the consequences is impossible. In every divine-human meeting the vital element is change. Vision produces change. So to pray for a new vision of God is dangerous unless you are prepared for the consequences: your life will be changed around.

See how such visions of God have altered men and women. Abraham got up and left for Canaan. Moses returned to Egypt and confronted Pharaoh. Paul abandoned his holy war and joined those he once persecuted. The results of meeting God is dramatic change. So how to know the true vision that comes from God? How to see Him as He truly is? Not through some mystic manifestation, that's for sure! The clearest vision is given in the appearance of God Himself—Jesus Christ. He is the “express image of God” (1 Cor 4)—in the face of Christ.

By beholding we become changed. By beholding Jesus we, through this vision, are changed and transformed. But how? What do we see? Not some spiritual magic but through a recognition of the characteristics that make up God. By seeing God in action—especially in the life of Jesus—we can identify the truth about God and be changed into some kind of person. We become “partakers of the divine nature.” The mind that was “in Jesus” is now “in us.” The change that occurs is our being re-made in the divine image, so that in our humanity we reflect our Maker.

Remember the Greeks who came to Philip and wanted to “see Jesus”? (John 12:21). Remember also Jesus' words that if we see Jesus, we see God the Father (John 14:9). This is the way we “see the Invisible.” Not some kind of mystic “inner eye,” but a real and practical revelation by demonstration in the person of Jesus.

Ellen White Comments

He [Christ] impressed the people with the necessity of spiritual worship. His lessons were impressive, beautiful and weighty with importance, and yet so simple that a child could understand them. The truth He presented was so deep that the wisest and most accomplished teacher could never exhaust it. Those who work as seeing the Invisible, will always preserve simplicity, charging the simplest words with the power of the grandest truths. {SD 266}

However great and glorious hereafter, our reward is not all to be reserved for the time of final deliverance. Even here we are by faith to enter into the Saviour's joy. Like Moses, we are to endure as seeing the Invisible. {MH 504}

Our minds take the level of the things on which our thoughts dwell, and if we think upon earthly things, we shall fail to take the impress of that which is heavenly. We would be greatly benefited by contemplating the mercy, goodness, and love of God; but we sustain great loss by dwelling upon those things which are earthly and temporal. We allow sorrow and care and perplexity to attract our minds to earth, and we magnify a molehill into a mountain. . . . Temporal things are not to . . . engross our minds until our thoughts are entirely of the earth and the earthly. We are to train, discipline, and educate the mind so that we may think in a heavenly channel, that we may dwell on things unseen and eternal, which will be discerned by spiritual vision. It is by seeing Him who is invisible that we may obtain strength of mind and vigor of spirit. . . . {OHC 339}

God is revealed to us in Christ. Our Saviour is the image of the invisible God. Oh, how near to heaven we may be. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” Christ declared. {UL 142}

