

Seeing What Is Not Yet Seen

Rhythms of Life

2 Corinthians 4:18

¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

I have this alarm clock that Amanda, my wife, absolutely hates. I brought it into our marriage because it is something I have owned since I was in 7th grade. The alarm clock was a Christmas gift from my parents. The reason my wife loathes this wicked machine is because it has stopped performing its main job—waking me up. Actually, it stopped waking me up years ago.

I don't know...

...maybe because I am a sound sleeper

...maybe because I don't want to wake up when it tells me to

...maybe because I have gotten used to its sound

The alarm clock buzzer gets mistaken for a part of my dream. My mind has been long conditioned to morph the sound waves entering my ears into a different sound within my dreams. In addition, my mind sends a barely discernable signal to my arm and index finger, and without me ever waking up, accurately flips the right switch to turn off the alarm.

As a result of this extremely rare condition I have, the alarm clock sits on Amanda's side of the bed. Now you know why she hates it 😊 ...maybe because it isn't the alarm clock per se, but my inability to wake up and shut the thing off that drives her mad.

So she wakes up before me... shuts the alarm off on the first buzz... reads and does stuff for a bit... then most of the time, she comes in and plays the role of the alarm clock—she wakes me up.

Revelation 1:9-20

⁹I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

¹²I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

¹⁹Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Wow! That's pretty incredible!

Do you believe it? Do you?

You believe it as a metaphor, right?

Because you don't actually believe

Jesus had a sharp two-edged sword

coming out of his mouth!

How could he talk?

Do you actually believe he had seven stars in his hand? Do you actually believe that our church is a lampstand? Was Jesus actually on Patmos? He is at the right hand of the Father on high...so was he actually on Patmos or was it more like a dream?

Psychologists say dreams are critical—metaphors that help us work through realities. But dreams are not real...are they?

Of course not... Reality is only known by what you can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell—verifiable and empirical data perceived by your 5 senses. People argued that the only things that are real or true are those that can be verified by the scientific method. That is: only hypothesis that can be tested in a controlled environment in space and time are true.

Empiricists, as they are known, only know things through the sensory experiences of this world and not by faith—they take physical evidence very seriously, and words and ideas not at all seriously. It is ironic because empiricism is an idea... only embraced by faith and cannot be "empirically" known. Even though empiricism disproves itself, it has permeated 21st century America.

That's why Joe Friday says: "Just the facts, ma'am. Just the facts."

As if facts alone have meaning.

We may know more facts than anyone in the world... but none of them have any meaning or truth, for meaning and truth themselves can't be scientifically proven. It can only be revealed.

Revelation 1:1

¹The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John...

The revelation of Jesus Christ.
The apocalypse of Jesus Christ.
The unveiling of Jesus Christ.

Anything really good can't be proven by science anyway. What laboratory has ever discovered goodness? Or justice? Or truth? Or beauty? Or love?

Perhaps our empirical world, our "seen" world, is not the only reality. Perhaps there's more behind the veil.

2 Corinthians 4:18

¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Whenever it is time, Amanda usually wakes me up... if I haven't done so already. My preferred method of waking up isn't a loud buzzing noise signaling the end of dream-world and entrance into reality from my favorite alarm clock...

...rather a soft entrance beside me and a smooth hand on my back...

...I wake up best when Amanda scratches my back.

Have you ever had a dream that you were dreaming, but the dream within your dream was actually a person in the waking world trying to wake you up? What if this entire world is like a dream, and we're in the process of being awakened?

Whenever we are awakened from a dream, the thing that wakes us is a reality that won't fit in our dream. When my wife wakes me, my mind can't fit that reality from the outside waking world into the inner reality of my dream world.

If you wake someone too quickly from a dream, you can kill him from the shock. Did you notice that in Rev. 1:17 John fell as though dead until Jesus touched him and said, "Fear not." The loving thing to do when rousing someone from a dream is to wake them up slowly, whispering, "Sweetheart... you're having a bad dream. Wake up. It's just a bad dream." You do this with your kids, when they are having a bad dream.

To the dreamer in her dream, there is a gradual realization that the whisper in her ear can't be explained by the dream. But for a while it's like the whisper is part of the dream—an incongruent part of the dream.

Are there things in your world that are incongruent? That don't fit? That can't be explained by this world? Paradoxes, mysteries, things you can't comprehend?

Maybe they are real, and this entire, empirical world is the dream. Maybe those things are somebody whispering in your ear, "Sweetheart, wake up."

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In the days of Elisha the prophet, the king of Aram sent "horses and chariots and a strong force...and surrounded the city at night" where the prophet was staying. The king wanted to kill Elisha.

2 Kings 6:15-17

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked.

¹⁶ "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Elisha's servant saw what was unseen. He saw what was really real.

Maybe Jesus *really* did appear to John. Maybe Jesus *really* did have a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth. Maybe our church *really* is a lampstand, giving forth light. Maybe it's not just a metaphor, and maybe mystery...paradox...wonder... aren't less real than this world, but more real than this world.

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In 1884, Edwin Abbot, a preacher and schoolmaster published a book called *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. Flatland takes one on a mind-expanding journey into a different world to give one a new vision of our own. The book describes an entirely two dimensional world called Flatland, whose inhabitants can perceive only two dimensions – length & width.

One day, one of them has a revelation, an unveiling... for a few moments he is lifted out of Flatland and experiences three dimensions. He eyes are opened... he sees what is unseen. He returns to Flatland and tries to explain to everyone what he saw:

"It's not simply a square! It's a cube!" he says.
"It's not simply a circle! It's a sphere!"

The other Flatlanders think he's dreaming.

The world of three dimensions is called Spaceland which consists of length, width, and height. Our world currently comprehends four dimensions (add time).

And yet Flatlanders can only perceive, only empirically know two dimensions. Their world looks like a piece of paper. If we were Flatlanders, we would use our scientific method and perceive two dimensional realities: squares, circles, and triangles.

But suppose a three dimensional object entered our world and passed through it, like a sphere.

What would we see?

A circle.

What would we call it?

A miracle.

Why?

Because all at once a point appeared in our world, then grew into a circle, then shrank back into a point, then was gone.

What if three dimensional objects (spheres, cubes, cones) intersected our flat world all the time and stayed? Well, we'd be surrounded by miracles and meaning all the time and not understand it. We would struggle to believe...

We'd say: "Oh that's a square." But the one who received the revelation would say: "That's more than a square. That's a cube!"

We'd say: "Hey that guy over there is reading the BIBLE." But the guy with the revelation would say: "No! The sword of the living Christ is piercing a human heart."

We'd say: "Look—a church." He'd say: "It's a lampstand."

We'd say: "Look—that woman is giving a cup of cold water to a little kid in Jesus' name. What a nice thought." He would say: "Behold, Jesus the Christ is drinking His own love."

We'd say: "Look—men who appear drunk speaking in other languages!" The unveiler would say: "The Spirit is being poured out into open hearts."

We'd say: "Look—a naked, bleeding man on a cross!" God's revelation would say: "Behold the King standing on His throne since before the creation of the world."

We'd say: "Hey look—a baby in a manger." And he would start singing with the angels.

Why? Because his world would be full of miracle and meaning. He couldn't explain paradox, but he could believe it.

What if a three dimensional creature could somehow limit himself and enter Flatland and begin to tell of other dimensions...

...they would think him foolish and confused and utterly paradoxical

...they would say, "Nice metaphor... now get real!"

Well, maybe this three dimensional person has come to our Flatland, gave us a revelation, an unveiling, and we killed him for it.

We'd say: "Look—bread and wine." And the God-man, Jesus—the one who is the revelation says: "Behold, my body broken and my blood shed... a banquet for my household."

When Jesus says, "You are my body, my temple, my people, my bride... it is not a metaphor! It is the truth! If anything is a metaphor it is this world.

Jesus is fully God and fully human?

Impossible!!

...but true.

If I took three fingers and stuck them through Flatland and proclaimed: "Behold: all three circles are one. They are all me. Three yet one. I am Trinity."

Flatlanders would say: "Inconceivable!" The guy with the revelation would say: "It's true!"

Would it be a metaphor? No! It would be a truth more real than Flatland.

Now listen closely...

Suppose I were to stick my finger through Flatland. What would they see? A smudgy circle. But its meaning is: Jeremy is at hand!

And suppose time is one of the dimensions of Flatland. Imagine its length across this piece of paper. On the left is AD 30; on the right is 2,000 years later. If I took this piece of paper and held it a millimeter in front of me saying: "Behold Flatland! The kingdom of Jeremy is at hand!" in every place in Flatland that would be true. In every time in Flatland that would be true. And every place I intersected Flatland I would have come to that place in the space and time of Flatland.

Where I intersected Flatland, I would be present at all these points in their space and time. Now let's say I intersected Flatland at *every* point in their space and time, because Flatland was a two dimensional plane inside of me. Then what could I say to Flatlanders? "Behold, in me you live and move and have your being." And they wouldn't even know it... unless they believed.

In fact, you could say I was a reality in Flatland, that I was present in Flatland wherever people believed... wherever they saw, not with their eyes, because their eyes can only see two dimensions, but with their hearts.

In other words, stop taking this world so seriously and believe that Jesus' word is more real than all of this world...

...more solid ...more permanent ...more real ...it abides.

Hebrews 4:12-13

¹²For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Can you see it? Can you really see it?

2 Corinthians 4:18

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Do you want to know what to do?
Do you want to know how to live?

- 1) Receive the revelation of Jesus...
...his body broken and his blood shed
for you...
for us...
by faith
- 2) and then love.

Mark 12:29-31

'Hear, [O church], the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Love like you have never loved before.
Love in truth.
Love in action.

Not every work is an encounter with the living God. It must be done in Jesus' name... in faith and love.

Matthew 7:22-23

²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

You might do all of the two-dimensional works of a Christian and look good to everybody in Flatland, but God would know you never knew Him. Maybe you just went around drawing squares, acting as if you believed in cubes. Not every square in Flatland is really a cube. And there is more to being a Christian than just being square.

Love in the name of Jesus.

Even when you don't understand,
Or someone is making fun of you,
Or that you can't see any light at the end of your tunnel...

Love,
in the name of Jesus,
God...
...and your neighbor.

Two simply stated commands, that can radically change our world if applied... to our world.

This is God's vision for you...
...for us.

The future he has planned for you...
...for us.

God wants us to risk to love Him by faith
And to risk to love people in this world even beyond themselves:

- love your enemies
- If someone strikes you on the cheek, turn to him the other
- If someone wants to sue you for your coat, then give it to him
- Give to the needy in secret

YEAH! BUT NONE OF THESE PEOPLE DESERVE IT!!

You know, no one deserves love...
...we all deserve death

If anyone deserved anything...
...it was Jesus

But the manifested presence of God was crucified in this world because He was teaching people to live like they were out of this world.

