

X-Ray Vision—Calling That Which is Not As Though It Is

Romans 4:16-21 (text 17)

An X-ray gives us the ability to see things that we would not see otherwise—A broken bone, a cancer, a cavity in a tooth. X-rays see that which is not normally seen as though it is seen. ILLUS with X-ray of broken leg. God has “x-ray” vision—He sees things that be not as though they were.

God gave Abraham a **promise** he would be the father of more children than you could count. But the promise was not immediately fulfilled. Many years went by.

- All Abraham saw was a 80 year old man and his wife’s dead womb. He saw no evidence of the promise becoming a reality.
- But God saw something different (v. 17). God called “*those things which be not as though they were*.” Or, as Ecclesiastes 3:15 puts it, “*that which is to be hath already been*.” That is, as far as God is concerned, it was already a done deal.
- God called Abraham “*a father*” years before he was a father (Gen. 14:16; 15:4-6). In God’s eyes, Abraham was already the father of many nations (Gen. 17:1, 5).

God sees things in our life that are not, **but that could be**. The Lord sees things that could be in our church—Things that may or may not come pass, depending on what you and I do.

➡ The Bible gives several examples of this truth. As we examine these examples we will see one “common denominator” that enabled people to see what God already saw.

I. **Exodus 14:10-15**—

- A. **What did Israel see?** Egyptian soldiers... approaching chariots... pounding hoofs of horses... whips... spears... swords... and returning to slavery. That’s what they see!
- B. That’s NOT what God saw—God sees things different than we do! What did God see? God saw “*those things which be not as*”

though they were. God saw a strong east wind blowing... the Red Sea parting... Israel crossing on dry land... the Egyptian army drown in the sea... and His people singing and dancing on the other side!

- C. What made the difference? Verse 15—Israel had to obey God’s command to “*GO FORWARD*.” What if Israel never went forward? They would have never seen what God saw for them.
1. Before Israel was the Red Sea. How were they to “*go forward*”? They had to move at God’s command BY FAITH. Hebrews 11:29—“*By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land.*”
 2. You and I will never see “*those things which be not as though they were,*” until we move forward at God’s Word by faith. As long as you remain seated on the posterior of your back end, you’ll never see what God sees for you.

II. **Joshua 6:1-5**—

- A. What did Israel saw? They saw a city shut up tight surrounded by an impregnable wall.
- B. What did God see? He saw the walls fallen down flat... His people utterly defeating the enemy... and Jericho burned with fire.
- C. What made the difference? If the Israelites were to see “*those things which be not as though they were,*” they had to move by faith. Hebrews 11:30—“*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.*”

ILLUS: God saw a church built on the top of an obscure hill in China, long before it became a realty. For it to become a reality, a missionary had answer God’s call and move by faith! Do you think there were be that church on the hill top and hundreds of Chinese saved if that missionary didn’t MOVE OUT by faith?

- Sometimes in order to see “*those things which be not as though they were,*” God may have us to do some things that look foolish to the world. What did it look like to the inhabi-

tants of Jericho as Israel marched silently around the city each day for six days.

- ➡ MOVING FROM MICHIGAN TO WASHINGTON IN 1974. I remember the guys at the tool shop where I worked calling me crazy to leave a good paying job to go to a place I've never been... without any promise of an income... and no place to live... to start a church from scratch.
- ➡ Moving from Washington to Vermont. God saw *"things which be not as though they were."* God saw people getting saved and baptized and a church building built in Barton, Vermont. But for those things to become a reality, I had to move.
- ➡ God saw these buildings on this property when all we saw were trees, underbrush, and a \$250,000 price tag. But God said, "Go for it, and make an offer." We did and the offer was promptly rejected. But God wasn't through. God began to work on the sellers heart. Two weeks later our offer was accepted and today you are sitting here because 27 years ago we moved out by faith.

- What an **adventure** to move out by faith! This is dramatized in a movie I watched last night—*"Never Cry Wolf."*

A wimpy government bureaucrat named Tyler is assigned to go to Alaska and study the depletion of caribou to see if they were being killed by wolves.

It is obvious Tyler is a "duck-out-of-water" as he arrives in Alaska.

He hires a scruffy bush pilot named Rosie to fly him 300 miles into the wilderness. Rosie's dilapidated plane is held together with duck-tape and baling wire. It barely gets off the ground.

They have to fly between craggy mountain peaks because the plane cannot get enough altitude to climb over them. Tyler is a nervous wreck as they weave in and out through these tall shimmering mountains.

Rosie is casually at ease. He begins to talk with Tyler, “You what the problem is down in the lower 48?” Tyler meekly answers, “No...” Rosie continues, “All those people do is sit back in their living rooms and watch the boob tube. Life is too mundane and routine for them.” Then he asks, “Tyler, do you know why I came here to Alaska?” Tyler again whispers, “No...”

About that time the engine sputters and konks-out. The plane starts to descend heading towards the side of an ominous mountain.

Rosie rummages in his toolbox looking for a crescent wrench. Finally he dumps the box upside down emptying the tools on the floor of the plane. He grabs the wrench and opens the door of the plane. Meanwhile poor Tyler is totally paralyzed with fear.

Rosie steps out on the wing struct with his wrench and bangs on a nut giving it a tweak, a twist, and a turn. He climbs back in the plane, pulls out the choke, and tries to restart the engine. The engine sputters and finally starts. They just miss crashing into the side of a mountain.

Then Rosie casually looks over at Tyler and calmly says, “Now Tyler, as I was saying... The reason I came to Alaska was *adventure, Tyler... adventure.*”

- Do you know what the problem is in the lives of many Christians today? They lack the adventure of stepping out by faith into the undiscovered territory to see what God has for them. They will never see “*those things that be not as though the were*, because they don’t want to get out of their comfort zone. They would rather read about adventure than experience adventure for themselves. They would rather read about J. Hudson Taylor or William Carey than go themselves.
- ➡ Do you want some adventure? Step out by faith and do something for God that the world thinks is crazy!
- ➡ “*Adventure, Tyler! Adventure —Adventure, Christian! Adventure!!*”

III. Judges 6:1-6—

- A. What did Israel see? Desolation... poverty... and a vast multitude of enemies bent on destroying them.
- B. What did God see? He saw, *“those things that be not as though they were.”* He saw 300 men with empty pitchers and lamps within... He saw blowing trumpets. He saw an enemy so utterly confused that they fought against themselves and killed each other.
- C. What did Gideon have to do to see what God saw (7:9). He had to get up and go and trust God.

IV. 1 Samuel 17:23-24—

- A. What did Israel see? They saw a ten foot high giant with a coat of mail, a spear like a weaver’s beam, holding a sword.
- B. What did God see? He saw, *“those things that be not as though they were.”* He saw a young lad with a sling and five small stones. He saw that giant fall down deader than a sack full of hammers. He saw the Philistines running for their lives.
- C. What did David have to do to see what God saw? He had to step out by faith and confront the giant.

SUMMATION: Several years ago two friends named Walter and Arthur took a drive to the outskirts of Los Angeles. They went to a desert area where almost no one lived. Walter wanted to show his friend Arthur some property he wanted to buy. Walter described his vision for the property. But Arthur didn’t see much potential in the desolate land. And so, Art Linkletter turned down the opportunity to partner with Walt Disney in building a theme park that would be worth billions of dollars. Walt Disney *saw things that were not as though they were.*

I love the story the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4. God blessed her with a son. But after a few years the son died suddenly. She went to Mt. Carmel to see Elisha. When she was asked, *“Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?”* she answered, ***“It is well,”*** (4:26). But her child was dead. Do you know what she did? She called *“those things that be not as though they were.”* While her son was not well, she said he was well. She had “X-ray” vision—FAITH.

I believe if we had faith like that Shunammite woman, we would also see more *“things that be not as though they were!”*

What is the common denominator in these examples? Someone stepped out by faith!

➡ One of the most sobering thoughts I have about the Judgement Seat of Christ is for the Lord to show me all that He had for me, but I never saw them realized because I did not move forward by faith at His command.

What does God see for YOU? What would you like to see? Would you like to see *“those things that be not as though they were?”* Then you are going to have to get off your duff and step out by faith.