

ARE YOUR EYES NAKED OR OPENED?

Today's Text: 2 Kings 6: 8-23

Extracts:

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. *And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha*” [2 Kgs 6: 15-17]

Recently, there was a heavy rainstorm in Trinidad, which led to flooding and severe damage to utilities. The equipment of the cable company that supplies the service to my apartment was knocked out for two days. As a result, I could not watch my favourite television stations, such as TBN and CNN. I was left with the local stations, with blurred pictures.

During those two days, there was nothing wrong with my two naked eyes. My vision remained as clear as before the storm. There was nothing wrong with my television set. Yet, I could not see my favourite stations or programmes that I had come to take for granted. So, what had gone wrong with my “naked” eyes? For my naked eyes to be able to see the cable stations, they have to become “opened” eyes. The cable company’s equipment will have to be repaired or replaced and reconnected to my television set for my eyes to “open” to the cable stations again. I have since learnt a spiritual lesson from that event.

In today’s background story, Elisha’s servant came out early in the morning only to see with his naked eyes that he and his master had been surrounded by Syrian troops. He was afraid and ran inside to tell the prophet that they were in danger of being killed. The prophet was not afraid. Instead, he assured his servant that those on their side were more and stronger. He prayed God to “open his eyes that he may see” [2 Kgs 6: 17]. Do you know what he saw? Horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha!

Would you not like to have such a privilege, to have opened rather than mere naked eyes? What will it take to get and keep the privilege? Why is it necessary for your spiritual walk? These are some of the issues that we shall examine in today’s lesson.

1. Naked versus Opened Eyes

It is interesting that although we have two eyes, we only see one vision or picture with both of them *at a time*. Double vision, that is, seeing two pictures at the same time, is a medical problem, which can arise from a structural defect in the eye's optical system or due to a head injury which affects vision. It is in recognition of this basic natural law of vision that believers are required to "walk by faith" and not by sight [2 Cor. 5:7]. To walk by sight is to order our lives in accordance with what we can see with our naked eyes *at any particular point in time*. In other words, anything outside of our five senses [sight, smell, feel, taste, hearing] is not possible or feasible. On that basis, we accept the doctor's verdict that that cancer is a hopeless case and death is inevitable. That barren wife should give up trying to get a baby because there is no hope. That young man should give up looking for a job because nobody is hiring. The divorce process has been completed and there is no hope for reconciliation. Your only child can no longer be retrieved from prostitution or homosexuality, drugs or gangs, etc.

The person who walks by faith, on the other hand, uses what we can call "opened" eyes. In other words, s(he) sees beyond the naked eye and acts on that basis. In our rainstorm story above, it was the cable that opened my naked eyes to see beyond the local television stations. What is the equivalent in the spiritual sense? The bible tells us that it is *faith*.

Faith has been defined as "the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen" [Heb. 11:1]. A simple illustration of this concept is found in the relationship between thunder and lightning. Lightning is the substance of thunder that we hope is on the way and the evidence of the thunder that we have not yet heard. Thus, when lightning flashes, people scamper for cover. They are very confident that thunder is on the way! But in reality, thunder and lightning are the outcome of the same process. Two clouds driven by strong winds collide in the sky. The clash produces electricity (lightning) and a loud noise (thunder). Since light travels faster than sound, we see the lightning first before we hear the thunder later. *In truth*, both occur *at the same time*. Is it not interesting that it is lightning, not thunder, that kills or causes fires? Yet, ignorant people fear thunder more! That is why God says that faith is more important and that without it, we cannot please Him [v. 6].

The story of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist illustrates this quite well. John and Jesus were cousins who grew up together in the same neighbourhood. John was only six months older. But, until John began his ministry and after the Holy Spirit had come upon him, he did not know the divine aspect of Jesus. In Matthew's Gospel, based on what witnesses had seen with their naked eyes, we are told that as Jesus was coming out of the water, the Spirit of God descended on Him like a dove (analogous to lightning), followed by a voice from heaven (like thunder) which proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" [Matt. 3: 16-17]. In John's Gospel, John the Baptist himself told the

story and he was in Spirit at the time. These are his words, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. *And I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*” [Jn 1: 32-33]. In other words, using his opened eyes, John heard the voice *before* he put Jesus in the water!

We are now in a position to define what it means to walk by faith. It means that, *when we are in Spirit, God gives us the privilege to know in advance what is going to happen in the future about a matter of our concern so that we do not need to worry about what we see around us today.* With that confidence in God’s word, we then act on the hope instead of succumbing to our present pains or fears. Let us study the story of Elisha and his servant to make this clearer.

2. Elisha’s eyes were opened; his servant’s were naked!

The king of Syria was at war with Israel. However, he was amazed that all his strategies to gain victory were known to the king of Israel long before he could execute them. He suspected that there were traitors among his servants. He called them and asked, “Will ye show me which of us is for the king of Israel?” One of his servants replied, “None, my lord, O king; but *Elisha the prophet that is in Israel telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber*” [2 Kgs 6: 8-12]. How did Elisha acquire that privilege to know things in advance before they happened?

According to Scriptures, “surely the Lord God will do nothing but (unless) He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets” [Amos 3: 7]. Prophets are inspired messengers of God and “prophecy came not in old time by the will of man but *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” [2 Pet. 1: 21]. God has promised believers that “in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon *all flesh*; and your sons and your daughters shall *prophecy*, and your young men shall *see visions*, and your old men shall dream *dreams*” [Acts 2: 17; Joel 2: 28]. That is understandable. Young people are restless and hardly sleep. So, God reaches them by visions. Old people tend to sleep more, and God reaches them by dreams!

Examples abound in both the Old and New Testaments of each of these gifts of the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 12: 4-10]. Here are a few illustrations:

- a) *Prophecy*: The Old Testament is in the main a series of prophecies about Jesus Christ [Lk 24: 44]. The Book of Revelations is about the return of Jesus Christ as Judge and King.
- b) *Dreams*: Solomon received his wisdom in a dream [1 Kgs 3: 5-13]. It was in a dream that God told Joseph that his wife, Mary, had been chosen as the mother of Jesus [Matt. 1: 20-25], and when the life of the infant Jesus was threatened by Herod, it was by dreams that God led Joseph to take

Him to Egypt for safety [**Matt. 2: 13-15**] and to return and settle in Nazareth [**Matt. 2: 19-23**].

- c) *Visions*: Saul of Tarsus, popularly known as Paul, encountered Jesus in a vision on his way to Damascus. Light from heaven shone around him and he heard a voice that told him, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” [**Acts 9: 3-6**].

There are many other ways by which God communicates with believers and it is His choice which one to use at any particular point in time. What is important, however, is that such communication gives us in advance what to expect later so that we can continue to act with confidence *in spite of* what our naked eyes may be showing us.

A divine cable company called the Holy Spirit supplies all God’s channels of communications. Elisha had been called and anointed prophet in the place of Elijah. Paul has written, “Brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and *were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*” [**1 Cor. 10: 1-2**]. Recall that the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night symbolized the Spirit of God leading their steps. As soon as they reached the Red Sea, the Angel of God passed over them and the pillar stood behind them. That is analogous to baptism by the Holy Spirit. Crossing the Red Sea was the equivalent of baptism by water [**Ex. 14: 19-31**]. If you are bothered by the sequence, let me remind you that the household of Cornelius began to speak in tongues while Peter was still speaking, and Peter asked his doctrine-minded colleagues, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, *which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?*” [**Acts 10: 44-48**].

On the day that Elijah was taken to heaven, he crossed the Jordan River with Elisha. That was Elisha’s water baptism. Next, he received a double portion of Elijah’s power. That was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Since those who are baptized of water and of the Holy Spirit are called born-again, and since only those who are born-again can see the kingdom of God [**Jn 3: 1-5**], it follows that *only those who are in Spirit have opened eyes to see spiritual things*. Elisha had opened eyes but his servant had naked eyes for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” [**v. 6**].

Having been told that his enemy was actually the prophet in Samaria, the king of Syria determined that his victory lay in eliminating Elisha. Based on his spy’s report on where to find the dangerous man, the king surrounded Elisha with heavily armed troops under the cover of night. When Elisha’s servant went outside early in the morning, he saw the troops and became afraid. He rushed back in and alerted the prophet of the danger. Was Elisha scared? Not at all because God would have shown him (by dreams or visions, etc) the end of the matter, even before the king of Syria thought of it!

He told his servant not to be afraid because “they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” He prayed that God should open his servant’s eyes to the spiritual reality that surrounded them. God did and the servant *saw* that it was the Syrian troops that were in deep trouble, not Elisha [2 Kgs 6: 13-17]!

Paul has written, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, how that *Jesus Christ is in you*, except ye be reprobates” [2 Cor. 13: 5]. When you have the Spirit of Christ sustained continually by the Holy Spirit, then you can claim the blessing that “greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world” [1 Jn 4: 4]. That Spirit is best demonstrated by fruits (of the Holy Spirit) [Gal. 5: 22], not by manifestations [1 Cor. 12: 4-10]. So, what did Elisha do with the Syrian troops? In response to Elisha’s prayer, God struck them blind. Then, under the guise of leading them to where to find their target, the prophet, Elisha brought them right into the city centre! When the Lord re-opened their eyes, they found themselves helpless and surrounded by the army of Israel. Elisha prevented the king of Israel from harming them. Instead, “he prepared great provision for them, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away and they went to their master. *So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel*” [2 Kgs 6: 18-22].

Without shooting a single arrow or throwing a single spear, Israel won a major victory, just because a lone prophet had opened eyes. He walked by faith and not by sight.

3. Lessons

The most obvious lesson that we should learn from today’s lesson is that *those who are prepared to walk by faith will routinely hear from God because He rewards those who diligently seek Him* [Heb. 11:6], *and He will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed on Him because they trust in Him* [Is. 26: 3]. If we do our part, God will do His. Here are the simple steps:

a) *Acquire opened eyes*

Confess your sins and surrender your life to Christ. If you were to do an honest appraisal of your situation, you might be surprised to know how much you still rely on your own efforts or human advice [from popular television shows or gurus] or horoscope to take critical decisions about your present or future. Jesus has said, “without Me ye can do *nothing*” [Jn 15: 5]. Unfortunately, people do not value what they have not worked or paid for.

A manifestation of Christ’s presence within you is that your body becomes “the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is in you*” [1 Cor. 6:19]. If your body is now the temple of the Holy Spirit, then, your body parts are also transformed into spiritual parts. Your naked eyes become opened eyes.

Your mind becomes the mind of Christ [1 Cor. 2: 16]. Will it then surprise you when God begins to reveal to you events in your future and how to deal with them! So, when God tells you that He will save your marriage, you will no longer worry when you are served with the divorce papers. When God reveals to you or through others that your cancer or barrenness is over, you will no longer believe the doctor's "evil report."

b) *Use opened eyes to glorify God!*

Elisha used his opened eyes to protect the chosen children of God (Israel) and to demonstrate the fruits of the Holy Spirit (forgiveness). He did not use the privilege for self-aggrandizement or self-enrichment. He continued to fear God. Likewise, you should not give the impression to people that God speaks to you because of your "righteousness" or special relationship with Jesus! The privilege is accessible to all because God has promised to give of His Spirit to *all flesh*. So, don't block the flow!

4. Conclusion

Each of us has two physical eyes, whether we use glasses or lenses in addition. Yet, those two eyes can only see one view at a time. Should they see double, it is a medical problem which, if not corrected, could be life threatening. We also have another set of two eyes, one physical (the naked eye) and the other spiritual (the opened eye). Again, if these two eyes do not work together, we are dealing with a case of double vision. Unfortunately, most of us enjoy seeing double in spiritual matters, but "a double-minded man is unstable in *all* his ways" [Jam. 1: 8].

The opened eye is certainly superior to the naked eye and it can only be acquired when we stop conforming to this world and, instead, transform our minds to conform to God's way and will [Rom. 12:2]. That is the mind that can enjoy peace because it is stayed on God [Is. 26: 3]. So, be of good cheer! Christ has overcome the world. If you let Him, you will soon overcome yours.

Give up your naked eyes or, better, get them opened!