

We Would See Jesus



Part 2: Looking upon You

T. M. Moore

The Fellowship of Ailbe

A ReVision Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Welcome to *Looking upon You*

You know what it's like when your eyes meet the eyes of someone you love? Well, when we go seeking Jesus, to see Him in His glory, what we discover is that He is looking upon us already, and always.

He's expecting us, and He looks upon us like the Good Shepherd that He is, testing our hearts and minds to heal, renew, and refresh us. John's vision of Jesus in Revelation 1 is meant to encourage us in seeking Him, and to help us develop a vision of the reigning Christ that we can summon with the eyes of our heart and meditate on fruitfully.

We can learn to look upon Him Who is ever looking upon us, and as we do, we are increasingly transformed into the image of our Lord Himself.

All the more reason to pray to our Father, "Sir, we would see Jesus!"

We're pleased to provide these *ReVision* studies at no cost, to help you in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

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T. M. Moore
Principal

1 The Lord Sees

*The LORD looks from heaven;
He sees all the sons of men.
From the place of His dwelling He looks
On all the inhabitants of the earth;
He fashions their hearts individually;
He considers all their works.* Psalm 33.13-15

The Lord's face

A common appeal of psalmists and prophets is that the Lord would shine His face upon them. That is, as the saints of Scripture sought the Lord, the first thing they sought was His face. Seeing the face of God is an experience much to be desired, because of all the benefits it entails.

Moses asked to see the glory of God, and God outlined the implications of that appeal by saying that no man could see His face and live (Ex. 33.18-20). Yet Moses said that the Lord spoke to him “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33.11), and this, just before he asked to see the Lord’s face and was denied. Nevertheless, God Himself confirmed to Aaron and Miriam that He spoke to Moses “face to face”. He qualified this, however as meaning, “plainly, and not in dark sayings” (Num. 12.6-8). It is in this regard that Moses reminded the people on the plains of Moab that God had spoken to them “face to face” on the mountain, when He gave them His Law (Deut. 5.4).

The face of God indicates the Presence of God; and where the Presence of God is, His glory is, and He becomes known to us in real and spiritual ways. Jacob, awaking from a powerful dream, understood that he had seen God face to face (Gen. 32.20), so he named the place of his encounter Peniel: “face of God.” The face of God also carries the sense of being alive unto God or before Him, or to His observation and awareness (1 Sam. 26.20), in which sense, we are all always before the face of God.

Seeing the face of God – not literally, but with the eyes of the heart – is thus to enter the Presence of God and to experience His glory. God inspired the writers of His Word to repeat this appeal over and over again.

Let’s take a closer look at what Scripture means by referring to the face of God, and why seeking the Lord’s face matters so much.

The face of God

The “face of God” is used throughout God’s Word to signal many benefits that come from being in the Presence of the Lord and His glory. The face of God indicates blessing and favor from God (Num. 6.25); the strength of God coming upon us (1 Chron. 16.11; Pss. 27.8; 105.4); His help in our times of need (Pss. 102.2; 104.29); the filling of His Spirit (Ezek. 39.29); and the revelation of God’s glory in His Word (Ps. 119.135; 2 Cor. 3.18).

To see the face of God is to know restoration and salvation (Pss. 31.16; 80.19). The effect of seeing God’s face is to increase in righteousness and God-likeness (Ps. 17.15; 2 Cor. 3.12-18). No wonder we are commanded to seek the face of God for these many benefits and blessings (1 Chron. 16.11; Pss. 27.8; 105.4). To see the face of God is to know His approval (2 Chron. 6.41, 42), and the peace, joy, and wellbeing that come with that.

When we pray that we might see Jesus, that the eyes of our heart may be opened to know His calling, glory, and power, it is seeing the *face* of Jesus, and all these many benefits, that we principally seek.

But in another sense, the face of God refers to His turning against us in wrath and judgment (Lev. 20.3-6; 26.17; Jer. 21.10), and withdrawing His Presence and leaving us alone to ponder our sin (Deut. 31.17, 18; Pss. 13.1; 27.9). We want the face of God to look favorably upon us, not in judgment; and it should be the great desire of our heart to know this experience of His Presence, and to draw from it all the strength, help, favor, blessing, righteousness, and salvation that His face and glory can bestow.

So as we pray that we might see Jesus, and that God might open the eyes of our heart so that the Spirit might grant us wisdom and revelation, we look first to see the Lord's face, to know the glory, peace, and joy that are focused on us by His glance.

And what we will find as we seek the face of the Lord Jesus, and the glory therein to be revealed, is that He is already and always looking upon us with His eyes.

He sees us

Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) wrote *The Vision of God* to encourage believers to seek the Lord's face. He wanted them to be encouraged as they did, and to know that God is already looking upon them and within them as they turn to Him in prayer. He prayed, "Thou, Lord, dost regard every living thing in such wise that none of them can conceive that Thou hast any other care but that it alone should exist, in the best mode possible to it, and that each thinketh all other existing things exist for the sole purpose of serving this end, namely, the best state of him whom Thou beholdest." He rejoiced in the Lord's glance: "Lord, Thy glance is love. And just as Thy gaze beholdeth me so attentively that it never turneth aside from me, even so is it with Thy love...I am because Thou dost look at me, and if Thou didst turn Thy glance from me I should cease to be."

Because of this, God's continually looking upon us in care and love, Nicholas knew that, "With Thee, to behold is to give life; 'tis unceasingly to impart sweetest love of Thee; 'tis to inflame me to love of Thee by love's imparting, and to feed me by inflaming, and by feeding to kindle my yearnings, and by kindling to make me drink of the dew of gladness, and by drinking to infuse in me a fountain of life, and by infusing to make it increase and endure."

Seeing the face of Jesus, radiant with love for us, and knowing that He constantly looks upon us in this way, inflames us with greater love for Him; and this, in turn, causes us to increase in Him, to become more like Him, and be strong and constant in His service. Nicolas rejoiced in the Lord as He prayed, "Thy mercy followeth every man so long as he liveth, whithersoever he goeth, even as Thy glance never quitteth any. So long as a man liveth, Thou ceasest not to follow him, and with sweet and inward warning to stir him up to depart from error and to turn unto Thee that he may live in bliss. Thou, Lord, art the companion of my pilgrimage; wheresoever I go Thine eyes are always upon me."

Knowing that the eyes of the Lord are constantly upon us, looking at us as we come seeking Him, incites us, to call on Him in earnest prayer, that He might open the eyes of our heart, and by His Word and Spirit, draw us before His gaze and into His Presence, so that by His glory, we might be welcomed, warmed, and wondrously transformed.

For reflection

1. What does it mean to you to seek the face of Jesus?
2. What do you expect to happen as you gaze upon the face of Jesus?
3. Why is it important to know that the Lord Jesus is always looking upon you with His love?

Next steps – Preparation: Spend an extended season in prayer, meditating on the face of Jesus, as He looks upon you with love.

2 The Seeing Lord Tests

*I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings.* Jeremiah 17.10

*Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,
But establish the just;
For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.* Psalm 7.9

“For the LORD does *not* see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16.7

What does He see?

We have established that the Lord Jesus keeps His eye continually set on each one of us. It’s a mystery how He can do this, and we have to be content with that. We cannot understand *how* He is able to look upon every one of us all the time; but we can understand *that* the Scriptures say He does. We accept that, and we rest in the continuous, loving, gaze of our Good Shepherd.

But what precisely is the Lord looking for as He gazes continually upon us? Of course, He sees all the outward things we are doing, and He makes note of all our ways. As we look to see Jesus seeing us, we are like soldiers standing inspection. We want to make sure that everything about our outward appearance reflects the gaze of Him Who looks upon us continually. We want Jesus to see Himself refracted through all our ways, for then He – and we – will know that He truly lives in us, and the life we live in the flesh we are living by the grace and in the power of the Lord Who dwells in us (Gal. 2.20, 21).

We are never out of the Lord’s sight; He sees all our ways. The more we look at Jesus, looking upon us, the more we will increase in love for Him and want our lives to be like His, as Nicholas of Cusa explained. To see the face of Jesus, Nicholas argued, is to see the template for every countenance – those caring and sympathetic eyes, that welcoming smile, that loving gaze, those lips of grace from which the Word of God continuously flows, that face set like flint to do the will of God.

Thus, Nicholas concluded, “Whence I now perceive that, if I hearken unto Thy Word, which ceaseth not to speak within me, and continually enlighteneth my reason, I shall be mine own, free, and not the slave of sin, and Thou wilt be mine, and wilt grant me to behold Thy face, and then I shall be whole.”

Beyond the outward person

But the loving and searching gaze of Jesus does not stop with our outward ways, seeking to know the extent to which they conform to His. The Lord searches our heart, to determine the bent and health of our affections. And He tests the mind, to see whether our thoughts are in line with His mind, which we have by virtue of our faith in Him (1 Cor. 2.16).

We want to see Jesus. We want to see the glory in His face (2 Cor. 4.6), so that we may bask in His love and be transformed to love Him more and to love more like He does (2 Cor. 3.12-18). So as we seek the face of Jesus, and – with the eye of the heart, not the physical eye – see Him seeing us, we must know that He is looking into the depths of our being, into our very souls.

Jesus searches the heart of each one of us. He wants to know whether our loves, desires, hopes, aspirations, and longings are set where they ought to be – on Him and on our neighbor. He searches us to discover any

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straying of our love to things or status or self; any holding back of complete love for Him; any unconfessed sins that block our fellowship with Him (Ps. 66.18).

He tests our minds to know what we're thinking – what our plans are, what vision is guiding us, how we think about loving our neighbors, whether we are increasing in the knowledge of truth, and so forth. We have the mind of Christ, and our fullest wisdom, most complete knowledge, and most fruitful thoughts come when we're thinking with His mind rather than our own.

As Jesus looks upon us with shepherding care, He is searching to see that our affections and thoughts are what they should be for us to know the fullest measure of life in Him. And not just so that He can know these.

What's He testing for?

Recently we had a technician come and test a portion of our basement for mold. We'd had water in a certain spot, and we just wanted to make sure there was no mold before we finished the repairs. The technician looked with His equipment beyond the surface of our ceiling and wall, so that he could see what was going on inside there. Happily, he reported, there was no mold.

When Jesus looks upon us to search our hearts and test our minds, He's looking for three things, those three great virtues that always remain: faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13.13). Is our faith set squarely on Him, or are we drifting to trust in created things? Are we hoping in His glory and inheritance, or have idols become our focus? Do we love Him and our neighbors, or is self-love diverting our affections from their proper focus?

As, in prayer and meditation, and waiting on the Lord, we look to see Jesus with the eye of the heart. As the Spirit opens our heart's eye to allow the Light of Jesus and His wisdom and knowledge to shine within our soul, we must understand that He is searching and testing us. And we must listen, as by His Word and Spirit, He reports the results of His search. He will advise us of the state of our faith, hope, and love, and show us how to correct or improve these as needed.

The Spirit within us can reveal any sins, direct us into all righteousness, warn us of the Lord's discipline – because He chastens whom He loves (Heb. 12.3-11) – and bring forth the fruit of more love to Jesus from our time seeking His face (Jn. 16.8-11; Gal. 5.22, 23). But we must seek the Lord's face, waiting on Him in meditation and silence, praying for the revelation of His glory, and listening for the results of His searching and testing, as the Spirit reveals them to us.

Then we can repair any damage, put on the righteousness of Christ, and go our way under the gaze of the Lord to know, love, and serve Him in everything we do. Let us pray with Nicholas of Cusa, "Feed me with Thy gaze, O Lord, and teach me how Thy gaze regardeth every sight that seeth, and all that may be seen, and each act of seeing, and every power of seeing, or of being seen, and all the seeing which thence resulteth. For with Thee to see is to cause; Thou seest all things who causest all things."

For reflection

1. Why are faith, hope, and love – the "abiding virtues" – so important to the health of our souls?
2. What does it mean to wait on the Lord in prayer, silence, and meditation?
3. What should we expect from this time of seeking the Lord's face?

Next steps – Transformation: As you pray, listen for one way you can improve each of faith, hope, and love in your life today.

3 The Eyes of a Shepherd

*The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.* Psalm 23.1-3

*Be diligent to know the state of your flocks,
And attend to your herds...* Proverbs 27.23

We would see Jesus

Our desire is to see Jesus, to contemplate Him in His glory, beginning with the glory we may expect to see in His face (2 Cor. 4.6). We're thinking in spiritual, not physical terms here; our desire is to learn how to let the Light of Jesus flood our soul through the eye of the heart, so that wisdom and revelation fill us with hope, enrich us with the Presence of Christ, and transform us into His image by the power that raised Him from the dead (Eph. 1.15-20; 2 Cor. 3.12-18). If we can see Jesus in this way, He can fill us with all the fullness of God, and overflow from us to fill the world with Himself (Eph. 3.20; Jn. 7.37-39; Eph. 4.8-10).

And this is our great desire: To be so filled with Jesus that He increases in us (Jn. 3.30) and stretches out through us to bring righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit to us and through us, on earth as it is in heaven (Rom. 14.17, 18; Matt. 6.10). Jesus is working to fill all things *in* all things so that *through* all things God might be glorified and the *knowledge* of the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (1 Cor. 10.31; Eph. 1.22, 23; Hab. 2.14).

That we can have a part in this great movement of grace and truth is utterly amazing. But it doesn't just happen. We must seek the Lord, and make it our goal to set Him always before our minds, so that His joy and pleasure and power are at work through us always, in everything we do (Ps. 16.8, 11). As we set our mind on the things that are above, where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, our perspective on life and the world will be dramatically transformed and empowered (Col. 3.1-3).

So we are learning what it means to pray, "Father, I want to see Jesus," so that the *effects* of seeing Jesus increase our hope, joy, and power for following Him. And when we give ourselves to seeing Jesus, we discover, first of all, that He is gazing upon us at all times. We want to pray with Nicholas of Cusa, "Feed me with Thy gaze, O Lord!"

Submitting to His look

This entails submitting to the gaze of Jesus. If we deny that Jesus is looking upon us, or if we are indifferent to His gaze, or think such an exercise to be rather too spiritual for us, we will not gain the benefit of *seeing Jesus seeing us*. And we will simply plod along in our faith, with unchanged hearts and minds, holding to a form of the knowledge of Jesus, but denying the power of it (2 Tim. 3.5).

So rejoice, because when you look into the face of Jesus, to be caught up in His glory, you will see the face of your Good Shepherd. A more careful reading of Proverbs 27.23 would be something like this: "Looking, look to see the face of your sheep..." The image we should see here is of a shepherd, inspecting his sheep as they return to the fold. He bends over each one, takes their face in his hands as he smiles and speaks softly to them. He opens their eyes wide, lifts their lips to examine their teeth and gums, inspects their ears, and perhaps comes close enough to smell each one, whether some infection or other malady may be present.

This is how Jesus looks upon us. He is our Good Shepherd, and He knows each and every one of us, calls us by name, and makes Himself known as our guarding and keeping and feeding Pastor (cf. Jn. 10). When you look to see Jesus, first, bow your head in His Presence. This will keep you appropriately humble before Him. Then, let the hymn lead you: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus; look full in His wonderful face...” Turn your face upward, and look into the loving, shepherding eyes of Jesus. Let His gaze come through the eye of your heart to bathe your soul; and listen as He inspects your affections, thoughts, values, priorities, and works, testing these all for the rich, leavening presence of faith, hope, and love.

Linger there. Don't be in a hurry. Let your Good Shepherd inspect, soothe, heal, and renew everything about you. Then rise to follow Him into the rich meadows and beside the still waters of His Word, where He will feed and nurture you to the joy and rejoicing of your heart (Jer. 15.16).

Enfold and unfold

It's possible that some readers may find such a protocol as I have outlined to be rather mystical and, therefore, probably not for them. But consider: When you come to Jesus in prayer, you are seeing something. You may just see the room around you. Or you might see Jesus on the cross. Or perhaps what you see is whatever the contents of your prayers suggest.

All that is fine. But allow these images to dissolve together in the face of your loving and attending Good Shepherd, and you will know more of your hope, more of His glory, and more of His power in prayer and life.

You might try praying with Nicholas of Cusa, “Blessed be Thou, O Lord my God, who dost feed and nourish me with the milk of comparisons; until Thou shalt give me more solid food, lead me, Lord God, by these paths unto Thee! For if Thou lead me not, I cannot continue in the way, by reason of the frailty of my corruptible nature, and of the earthen vessel that I bear about with me. Trusting in Thine aid, Lord, I return again to find Thee beyond the wall of the coincidence of enfolding and unfolding, and as I go in and go out by this door of Thy word and Thy concept, I find sweetest nourishment.”

Look to your Good Shepherd's face, and let Him enfold you in His loving hands, and unfold to you the mystery of His Presence, promise, and power.

For reflection

1. When you think of Jesus as our Good Shepherd, what images come to mind?
2. Why is it important to linger in the Lord's Presence, waiting in silence upon Him?
3. How can an exercise such as the one outlined here help us in getting more nourishment from the Word of God?

Next steps – Preparation: Try the exercise outlined here for a few days. Be patient, and wait for the Lord to gaze upon your soul and test your heart and mind.

4 Radiant

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ... Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4.6, 16-18

To see Jesus

It is beyond dispute here that Paul encourages us to seek the face of Jesus, that we might see the glory of God radiant there, and that, seeing that unseen wonder, we might be renewed day by day in our inner person. Concerning Paul's statement here, Calvin wrote, "Observe the expression, looking at the things which are unseen, for the eye of faith penetrates beyond all our natural senses, and faith is also on that account represented as a looking at things that are invisible" (*Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4.18*).

It is with the eye of faith that we look upon "things that are invisible", including the radiant face of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot see His face with our physical eyes; however, when the Spirit opens the eyes of our heart, and the Light of Jesus in wisdom and revelation begins to illuminate our soul, *we can see Jesus*, and we can see and enter the glory of God that is to be found in His face, with renewing grace and power.

Scripture consistently urges us to form within our hearts and minds a vision of the Lord, exalted in glory. That vision comes through the words recorded by those who have seen the Lord, such as Isaiah and John, as well as those through whom the Lord has spoken and described what He intends for us to see, such as David and other psalmists.

The key to inward renewal, renewal that empowers us to overcome all the afflictions, obstacles, fears, uncertainties, doubts, and trials of our lives in this material world, comes from looking "at the things which are not seen", beginning with the radiant face of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus sees us at all times. He looks upon us with the face of the Good Shepherd, as He searches hearts and minds to bring refreshment and renewal to our souls. But if we refuse to look on Him as He looks upon us, how can we expect to know the kind of day-by-day renewal and transformation Paul promises here and elsewhere (cf. 2. Cor. 3.12-18)? Yes, looking on unseen things with the eye of the heart is not easy. It does not come naturally to us. We're going to have to work at it, until we train our vision of Jesus to line up with what is revealed in the Word of God.

Indeed, it is *only* as we practice this discipline that we increase in the image of Jesus and thus realize the very reason for our salvation. As Nicholas of Cusa prayed, "Thus my God, Thou art at once invisible and visible. Thou art invisible in regard to Thine own Being, but visible in regard to that of the creature, which only existeth in the measure wherein it beholdeth Thee." We only truly live to the extent that we see Jesus, radiant in glory.

The glory in His face

The apostle John saw the radiance of Jesus' face twice – first, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and second, while he was on the Isle of Patmos. That second vision of the exalted Christ is worth reviewing: "Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His

countenance was like the sun shining in its strength” (Rev. 1.12-16).

The picture of Jesus’ face could not be more vivid. His head and hair were purest white, “like wool, as white as snow”. His eyes glowed “like a flame of fire”. And “His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.” Jesus revealed Himself to John in images of extraordinary radiance and brilliance. Have you ever gazed in wonder on the smooth surface of freshly fallen snow? Ever admired the clean white softness of a sheepskin rug? Gazed in ecstasy into a flickering campfire? Or dared for even a moment to turn your eyes upon the noontime sun? Can you imagine yourself doing those things, and seeing within them, all together in one compelling vision, the familiar features of the Good Shepherd, looking in His radiance into the eyes of your heart?

This is what John saw, and Jesus explicitly instructed him to “Write the things which you have seen” (v. 19). And John promised, “Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near” (Rev. 1.3).

Would you see Jesus?

Paul was able to see this glorious and radiant face of Jesus. He saw Him with the eyes of His heart. And he expected those who read his words to imitate him, even in such matters as this (1 Cor. 11.1).

When we come to Jesus in prayer, we must concentrate according to His Word, waiting on the Lord to open the eyes of our heart, so that we may see beyond the veil into the realm of unseen things, and glimpse, if not behold, the purity, radiance, brilliance, and fiery gaze of the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. Linger there. Force your mind to focus on this unseen reality, so clearly and compellingly described by John and others. Tune your heart to love this vision, to delight in it, and to draw closer to it, seeking the blessing of inward renewal that Paul promises.

The vision of Jesus’ face will illuminate any aspect of your soul in need of cleansing and renewal. In His loving, shepherding gaze, you can confess your sins without fear, rest in the filling of Jesus’ Spirit, and see yourself reflected in Him, and being made more like Him day by day.

Don’t be put off by what you may consider the strangeness of this discipline. Do not allow unfamiliarity with meditating on the beauty of the Lord (Ps. 27.4) keep you from straining and striving to keep your focus and improve your vision of Jesus. Say to the Father, “Father, I would see Jesus,” and to Jesus, “Lord, show me Your glory,” and to the Spirit, “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord” as you work to see into the Presence of the Lord and to enter His glory.

If you would see Jesus, you must see Him where He is and as He is. And this begins with seeking the face of Him Who sees you at all times.

For reflection

1. Do you expect to be able to see Jesus as John and Paul described Him?
2. What will seeing Jesus like this require of you in your times of prayer?
3. Do you think your walk with Jesus would be affected by having this vision of Him firmly etched into your soul? Explain.

Next steps – Transformation: Begin today working to gain and sustain this vision of the radiant face of Jesus.

5 Sword of Grace and Truth

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2.8, 9

All things? Really?

When Jesus was on earth, everything obeyed His Word. Sickness, death, demons, winds, seas, wine, fig trees, dead men, fishermen, even Pilate and the rest of the crowd that put Him to death – they were simply doing what God had commanded so long ago, and what Jesus maneuvered them to do (cf. Acts 2.23). Everything was made subject to Jesus and His will. Nothing could resist His Word. He had come to assert the Creator’s rights over all created things; He reconciled the lost world to God (2 Cor. 5.19), and when He ascended to heaven, and took His seat at the right hand of God, He passed that work to His followers, by giving them His Word and Spirit, and calling on them to look to Him.

The writer of Hebrews explained that our great salvation (Heb. 2.3) involved putting “the world to come” – about which he was writing (v. 5) – under the feet of those God had chosen, visited, and saved. He turned to Psalm 8 to recall that mandate, and he applied it to those to whom he addressed his epistle (2.5-8). These readers were beginning to lose sight of their calling from God; they were slinking back – for safety’s sake – into patterns of belief and life that were more agreeable to their unsaved neighbors. The writer of Hebrews wrote to put a stop to that “drift” (v. 1), and to call them back to their task of bringing the rule of King Jesus to bear on all of life, so that righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit would be evident in and through all their relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

The writer was emphatic about this: “For in that He has put all [things] in subjection to him [to His people], He left nothing *that is* not put under him” (v. 8). Everything in our lives is to be brought under our subjection as we are in subjection to Jesus.

But the writer didn’t see that happening, especially not in those believers who were slipping back into spiritual infancy by failing to hold fast their testimony and do the good works that go with being saved (Heb. 6.1-19). He wrote, “now we do not yet see all things put under him [the believers]...” He was being kind by being indirect – telling the truth, but telling it slant, as Emily Dickinson recommended. He could just as well have said, “Look at yourselves. You’re not living as witnesses for Christ. You’ve stopped working to bring His rule to bear in every area of your lives. I can see that, and if you’ll just look around, you can see it, too. You’re failing in your calling and mission from God!”

“But now,” he said more gently, “we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus...”

Seeing Jesus is the key to fulfilling our mission. Seeing Jesus shows us what we’re supposed to be. Seeing Jesus reminds us that everything we do has the potential to bring glory to God (1 Cor. 10.31). Seeing Jesus renews His light in us, so that we may shine His truth into our world in all our words and deeds. We may not be where we ought to be in our mission, but if we’ll see Jesus – like those Greeks in John’s gospel – then we’ll have the vision and power to continue our work of bringing all of life under His feet and for His glory.

Begin here

And that means, in the first place, seeing the face of Jesus with the eye of the heart – not the physical eye, but that aperture in the soul that opens to wisdom and revelation from the Spirit, so that what the Scriptures reveal to us about Jesus may shine into our heart, mind, and conscience, floodlighting our souls with glory, and transforming us, from glory to glory, into the very image we gaze upon in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4.6; 3.12-18).

As we see Jesus, we are renewed and refreshed in His Spirit, and under His shepherding gaze, we take up anew the work He has given us to do in seeking and advancing His rule over all things. See Jesus, and you will relish every detail of your daily calling, and put all things in subjection to His radiant, pure, and holy rule.

Pray with David: “One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple” (Ps. 27.4). Let this one thing be your first desire each day, and your constant companion throughout the day (Ps. 16.8; Col. 3.1-3), and you will begin to know more of Jesus stretching out in you and reaching out through you so that His Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.

One thing more

We’ve been looking at the revelation of Jesus’ face to the apostle John in Revelation 1; and there is one more aspect of that glorious countenance that we need to see clearly and continuously: The Word of God is in His mouth and on His lips, coming to you with grace and truth for your daily life (Rev. 1.16; Ps. 45.2).

When you enter the Presence of the Lord to see Jesus with the eyes of your heart, you must expect Him to speak to you from His Word. Have His Word open before you as you seek Him. Listen as He points out truths sufficient for your day; as He reminds you of His constant attending grace; and as He helps you prepare to make all your life subject to Him in the day ahead. Whatever you hear from Jesus, in those times of seeking and contemplating His face, will not be contrary to His Word. What you hear will not add to or replace His Word. What you hear and receive from Him will *be* His Word to you, coming to illumine your soul with understanding, enliven your heart with love, and reinforce your conscience with the holy and righteous and good Law of God.

Our lives and our world may not be what they should be just yet. But if we see Jesus, if we will look to Him and gaze upon Him and listen as He speaks His Word to us day by day, we will find that the Kingdom of Jesus is taking shape within us – soul and life – and coming to expression through us in everything we do. As Nicholas of Cusa prayed, “Of Thine own best and greatest gift, my Jesus, I contemplate Thee preaching words of life, and plentifully sowing the seed divine in the hearts of them that hear Thee.”

Our world exhibits the reality the writer of Hebrews spoke about: We do not yet see all things subject to the rule of King Jesus through His Kingdom citizens and ambassadors. Not yet.

But if we can *see Jesus* and, as the writer of Hebrews explains twice (Heb. 3.1; 12.1-3), and *consider* Him carefully, we may expect that the vision of His glory will work glory in and through us, so that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord comes increasingly to light in every facet and aspect of our lives.

For reflection

1. Which aspects of your life will you be working on today to make them subject to the Kingdom of Jesus?
2. Why is it important that “we see Jesus” for fulfilling our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12)?
3. What can you do to keep the vision of Jesus “always before” you each day (Ps. 16.8)?

Next steps – Preparation: Rewrite Hebrews 2.5-9 as a prayer. Pray it often throughout the day. Share it with some friends.

6 Consider Jesus (1)

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus... Hebrews 3.1

Looking to Jesus

The writer of Hebrews believed that the key to holding fast “the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end” (Heb. 3.5), to running “with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12.1), and to fulfilling our calling to bring the rule of King Jesus to expression throughout creation (Heb. 2.5-9), is to *see* Jesus, to *look* on Jesus, and to *consider* Jesus in all His many facets, features, functions, and forms.

This is what we are attempting in this series, as we look to find that revelation of Jesus which can help us in focusing the eyes of our heart on Him. We are asking God the Father to give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that He might open the windows of our soul and let the light of Jesus shine fully and brightly into our heart, mind, and conscience.

The exercise of seeing Jesus – what has often been referred to as the “beatific vision” – may seem strange or new to many of us; however, as Hans Boersma showed in his book, *Seeing God*, striving and straining to see, look upon, and consider Jesus has been a focal point of interest in every age of Christian history. Boersma’s careful reading and clear explanations of texts is both demanding and exciting, as he traces the development of Christian thinking about the beatific vision, shows its importance for the life of faith, and brings together the teaching of great thinkers from Gregory of Nyssa to Augustine, Palamas, Nicholas of Cusa, Aquinas, Calvin, the Puritans, Kuyper, and Edwards.

For our purposes, we simply want to consider Jesus, as the writer of Hebrews says, so that, when we come to Him in prayer, and as we go forth each day seeking His Kingdom and righteousness, the vision that we see will keep us on the path of following Jesus in everything we do.

The word translated “consider” in English versions of the Bible actually takes two different forms in the book of Hebrews, each, as we might imagine, with its own nuances and senses. In this and our next installment, we’ll consider each of these in turn, and how they might help us in seeing Jesus, and setting the Lord always before us (Ps. 16.8).

Perceive clearly

The verb that is translated “consider” in Hebrews 3.1 is *κατανοέω* (*katanoëo*). In their lexicon of the Greek New Testament, Louw and Nida note the following meanings of this verb: “to discover something through direct observation, with the implication of also thinking about it”; “to notice, to discover to give very careful consideration to some matter – to think about very carefully”; “to consider closely, more involved than mere seeing”; and “to come to a clear and definite understanding of something – to understand completely, to perceive clearly.” Note the emphasis on such words as “direct observation”, “very careful consideration”, “think about very carefully”, and “perceive clearly.” We don’t satisfy the demands of those actions without some considerable and determined effort.

But when the object of our consideration is Jesus, one of the most important things we should seek would be to consider and perceive clearly His beauty in all its forms (Ps. 27.4).

My sense of this verb is that it calls us to something very much like *aesthetic* attention, that is, lending both the mind and heart to the effort, so that we not only see (“more involved than mere seeing”) but feel and engage and participate in Jesus, like we would a great piece of music or an enthralling work of art. I think it’s quite possible that our vision of Jesus could be greatly enhanced, made more permanent and expansive, and be

more likely to fill us with joy and lead us to worship if we engage that vision as it is expressed in great works of art in the Christian heritage.

And there's no shortage of resources to turn to in this regard to help us in seeing Jesus.

Some works to consider

Think, for example of Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," and what it celebrates as the greatness, majesty, and power of the Word of God – Jesus. The hymn which had its beginning with Bernard of Clairvaux – "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" – lets us enter the sorrow and agony of Christ, and see Him looking upon us as He was lifted up for our salvation. Isaac Watt's great hymn, "Joy to the World! The Lord is Come!" can move us to consider the implications and effects of the incarnation of the Lord. And Eliza E. Hewitt's "More about Jesus" gives us a prayer to take us into the throne room and school room of the Lord, where, as Paul says, we may "learn Jesus" in prayerful song (Eph. 4.17-24).

A poem like John Milton's "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity" can bring us into the cosmic and spiritual significance of the incarnation at new depths of insight and understanding. Meditating on Psalms such as Psalm 2, 22, 45, 47, 93, and 110, and letting the images recorded in these psalms become imprinted on our soul, can also stretch and colorize our vision of Christ.

Great works of Christian art can also help us in considering Jesus. The glorious peace and resolve of the image of [Christ enthroned in the Book of Kells](#); and Him exalted as the center of the cosmos on the 9th century [Cross of Muiredach](#) help us in seeing how Celtic Christians envisioned the Lord. Jesus' face, radiant in glory as He taught His disciples, is [Rembrandt's effort](#) to interpret in paint something of the vision of John in Revelation 1. Albrecht Dürer's woodcut "[The Last Supper](#)" shows us both the glory of Christ and His shepherding care for His disciples.

Observing and contemplating these images, praying these psalms slowly and contemplatively, and singing these and many other glorious hymns robustly and often can bring to the work of considering Jesus a measure of insight, delight, and permanence that can help you in seeing Jesus, holding firm to your confession of Him, and running the race He has appointed for you with strength and joy.

To consider Jesus according to the criteria suggested by the verb *κατανοέω* we can turn to such aids as I have mentioned – and thousands more – as part of our daily meditation in the Lord and the disciplines we use to keep Jesus always before us. Seeing Jesus can be an aesthetic delight, as the Spirit of God uses the works of composers, poets, artists, and psalmists to open the eyes of our hearts so that we might see Jesus.

For reflection

1. Why do we say that considering Jesus must be more than just an intellectual activity?
2. Do you have a favorite hymn that puts the vision of Jesus squarely before your mind? Explain.
3. How can beautiful works of art, music, and poetry help us in considering Jesus?

Next steps – Transformation: Choose a hymn that focuses on some aspect of Jesus or His work. Sing it in your time of prayer. Take it with you to sing over and over throughout the day.

7 Consider Jesus (2)

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. Hebrews 12.1-3

Tired and weary?

These times we live in are making people tired and weary. A mood of uncertainty and even fear has settled over the world. People look for something to hope in, but their hopes are mostly for temporal security and wellbeing. Even Christians are becoming weary of the current situation, and some of them are beginning to drift from the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1.3).

But there is an antidote to this weariness: Consider Jesus. Look to Jesus. Meditate on the glory that is to be known in the face of Jesus. Set your mind on Jesus. Set the Lord always before you.

This, in fact, is not only a formula for overcoming weariness; it's a formula for becoming more like Jesus Himself, full of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 3.12-18, Paul explained that as we look to the glory of Jesus which is revealed in His Word, the Spirit brings us into that glory, so that we become partakers of Jesus (2 Pet. 1.4), and we are gradually and increasingly transformed into His image. Our true identity is to be found in Christ alone, and in becoming more like Him. As Andrew Peterson explained in his book, *Adorning the Dark*, "We need not look anywhere but to the eyes of our Savior for our true identity, an identity which is profoundly complex, unfathomable, deep as the sea, and yet can be boiled down to one little word: beloved" (p. 24).

The antidote to weariness and discouragement is to see the face of Jesus and to bask in His shepherding love. We consider Jesus when we look to Him in His Word and in His works of creation and culture. Paintings, poems, works of art, musical compositions, and the glories of creation can engage our hearts and minds for Christ as we spend time considering Him there.

But there is a second kind of considering Jesus that the writer of Hebrews mentions, and it is equally important. Taken together with the *aesthetic* and *affective* consideration of Jesus urged in Hebrews 3.1, this work of considering Jesus can more fully embed Him and His glory in our minds.

Theologians all

The second word the writer of Hebrews uses which English Bibles translate as "consider" is *ἀναλογίζομαι* (*analogizomai*). Louw and Nida explain the various meanings of this Greek word: "to think or reason with thoroughness and completeness – to think out carefully, to reason thoroughly"; "to consider carefully, to reason, reasoning."

This form of considering Jesus is more intellectual than the form of considering Him we saw in Hebrews 3.1. This requires a more earnest, systematic, and analytical use of the mind. We might thus say that what the writer urges in Hebrews 12.1 is a *theological* considering of Jesus. Together with the aesthetic and affective form of this verb, *ἀναλογίζομαι* is a call to theological study and contemplation.

Don't be put off by the word "theology." Theology is nothing other than the disciplined pursuit of the knowledge of God and His glory. All believers are theologians, in that we are all interested in knowing God better and living for His glory. We read our Bibles, listen to sermons, join a study group, read books, talk with one another, and pray so that we can fulfill Peter's instruction to grow in the grace and knowledge of our

Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3.18). So we're all theologians. We're all pursuing the knowledge of God and His glory.

The better and more consistent we become at this theological considering of Jesus, the livelier will be our faith, the more hopeful will be our walk, and the more fruitful we will be in all our work. Like Paul, we need to make it our business to press on to know the Lord (Phil. 3.7-11). We need to heed Hosea's exhortation to the weary and straying people of Israel, "Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD..." (Hos. 6.3). For when we give ourselves to this theological calling, then the Lord "will come to us like rain, like the latter *and* former rain to the earth" (Hos. 6.3).

Considering Jesus theologically

But what does this entail? First and foremost, searching the Scriptures in every part to learn what they have to tell us about Jesus (Jn. 5.39). All Scripture is breathed by the Spirit of God to convey the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3.15-17). The more we know Him, the more we will know the Father (Jn. 14.9); and the more we know Jesus and the Father, the more we will increase in the experience of eternal life (Jn. 17.3). As you read your Bible each day, wait on the Lord to show you Jesus in every section, book, chapter, and passage of His Word. He's there; all we have do is wait and think and meditate and pray. Soon enough, He'll present Himself for our consideration.

It will also be helpful to consider important aspects of the Person and work of Christ: His relationship to the Father and Spirit in the Godhead; His role in God's covenant; the nature and necessity of His work of atonement, redemption, and the reconciliation of the world. The mystery of His incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension should command our attention continually. We'll need to understand Jesus as the Head of the Church, which is His Body. Our study should take us into the throne room of Jesus, where He sits at the right hand of God, upholding the cosmos and everything in it by His Word of power. The return of Jesus and His place in the new heavens and new earth should also be part of our considering Him theologically.

Beyond the Scriptures, abundant resources are available to help us in considering Jesus theologically. Works of the Church Fathers, such as Augustine's *On the Trinity* or Anselm's *Why the God/Man*, together with the early creeds of the Church – Apostles', Nicene, and Chalcedonian – can stretch our minds to a larger vision and understanding of Who Jesus is. The writings of Jonathan Edwards ("Christ Exalted," "The Agony of Christ," *A Treatise on Religious Affections*, and so forth) are especially rich in teaching about the Person and work of Christ. Many recent and contemporary writers have done some very good work unpacking the teaching of Scripture about Jesus and His work of redemption. We should not be reluctant to look into such works, since they all were written to instruct, encourage, and equip us with a greater knowledge of our Lord.

Considering Jesus theologically and aesthetically is demanding but rewarding work. We must be neither lazy nor cavalier in pursuing the knowledge of the Lord, but diligent, hopeful, and eager to learn and experience as much of Him as we can, day by day, more and more.

In the remaining studies in this series, I'll try to establish a track or course that we can pursue to increase in the knowledge of our Lord. Let us keep before us that humble prayer of those Greeks, "Sir, we would see Jesus." For in seeing Jesus, we discover our true identity and the power for restoring all things to God.

For reflection or discussion

1. Many believers find theological study off-putting. Why should that *not* be the case?
2. What does it mean to you to *pursue* the knowledge of the Lord?
3. Why is it important that you do so?

We Would See Jesus Part 2: Looking upon You

Next steps – Preparation: What can you do today to ratchet-up your pursuit of the knowledge of God and His glory?

We Would See Jesus Part 2: Looking upon You

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why did the Lord give John such a powerful revelation of Himself in Revelation 1?
2. How does seeing Jesus help us to fulfill our calling to bring God's Kingdom to bear over all of life?
3. How would you explain the differences and similarities between the two word for "consider" in the book of Hebrews?
4. What is theology? How can you improve your own work as a theologian?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from the second part of our study, *We Would See Jesus*?

For prayer:

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