

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be discussing the subject of perspective.

I would encourage you to go to <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info> as I continue to update the site. I have links to several specific features below. Let me know what you think, if you have any suggestions, or if you have any requests.

As always, I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN). Additionally, if you have a subject or a question that you would like to have covered in a future edition of TGNN, feel free to send me a note and I'll do my best to address it.

The primary criteria for inclusion of articles are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

If you have a testimony to share, please send that to me and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

You can view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>

Or you can access other educational/informational/inspirational resources at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources>

You can find the current preaching schedule for the Springfield, Missouri Restoration Branch at https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources/Service_Schedule.php

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, please let me know. All responses to me will be treated confidentially unless you tell me otherwise.

Perspective

Isaiah 55

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

From the earliest days of warfare it was discovered that those who had a better view of the layout of a battlefield had distinct advantages over those that did not. If a captain or

general could get a view of the battlefield from a nearby hillside, he could direct his troops more effectively than the opposing force.

Some of the first balloons were utilized for reconnaissance during the American Civil War, and this aided the army that employed them significantly. In World War I the use of the airplane became commonplace, and this trend for faster and higher-flying vehicles has continued through to the present day, where drones or satellites can be used to obtain very high-resolution photos of both terrain, locations of troops, and other items.

It is this ability from higher elevations to see things in a perspective unlike our nearly one-dimensional view on the ground that makes this useful. No longer is it necessary to merely guess at the locations of people or things – we can *know* with absolute certainty. Having this knowledge is not enough though – it takes the wisdom to interpret those things and make decisions based on that information to be able to use it to the greatest effect.

It is not surprising that Isaiah should be given this scripture about how God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. His perspective leaves nothing to the imagination as to the truth of how things are, how things have been, and how things will be.

The things we think of when we see pictures of the earth or moon as seen from a spacecraft are just a small glimpse of the world we live in, and when you see pictures of planets, stars, nebulae or galaxies, you still see just a small fraction of the reality that we live in.

When we look at a photograph, we understand – or I hope we do – that it has compressed the three-dimensional world into a two-dimensional world. If you really think about it, the vision you have with your eyes compresses the world around you into just a collection of color dots in the back of your eyes.

In that respect, we never truly see the world around us – we only see a small representation of it, marvelous as it may be to our senses.

What we experience in our minds and imagination are much greater, and that is where the perspective of God comes into our presentation.

Doctrine and Covenants 22

5 And now, behold, this one thing I show unto thee, Moses, my son; for thou art in the world, and now I show it unto thee.

6a And it came to pass that Moses looked and beheld the world upon which he was created.

6b And as Moses beheld the world, and the ends thereof, and all the children of men, which are and which were created, of the same he greatly marveled and wondered.

6c And the presence of God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself; and as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth.

7a And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself,

7b **Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed; but now mine eyes have beheld God, but not my natural but my spiritual eyes; for my natural eyes could not have beheld, for I should have withered and died in his presence;**

What is marvelous about this is that it shows us our limitations and how unlimited God is.

While we do not always have this degree of perspective given to us, we do still have responsibilities about the things we do know and understand. Just as a general or captain can be good or bad in developing his battlefield strategy using all the tools at his disposal, not even good information can replace good sense.

Jesus taught about the kingdom of God extensively throughout his ministry. This was no small decision – it was the key to understanding his doctrine. Jesus taught things he knew and understood because he was privileged to have a view of spiritual matters that was much higher than that of any other man. He had the ultimate high ground.

I've used the terminology and symbolism of warfare not because of a particular bias towards that, but because it is something we can conceptually relate to. You could just as easily compare it to the job of an architect, a construction supervisor, or to mathematics, social work, medicine, computer programming, or even farming. When you have a greater perspective, you can make better decisions.

Jesus used that higher-ground perspective to teach about the kingdom of God to prepare the people for it. He wanted them to be there, just as he wants you and me to be there. It is definitely a different perspective that we are to take in our daily lives because we often limit ourselves to what we can see, hear, taste, smell, touch, or otherwise sense within the capacities of our bodies.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

If the world around us is all that we have to look forward to, it would be most depressing. We can certainly find out all that we can about the way the layers of the earth are distributed, or the things that “things” are made of, and so forth. We can advance our knowledge of this place that we live in and of one another, but there is a limit to that, and I don't say that with the idea that we are something great and wonderful, but because given enough time the knowledge of these things will slowly unravel to our understanding. But the kingdom of God is not limited by time and space, and we cannot unlock those mysteries by mere human intelligence.

Or perhaps more correctly, we cannot unlock the mysteries that really matter in terms of our existence, the nature of God, or eternity, without the assistance of someone with a higher and more profound understanding than we have – someone that lives there and knows the meaning of it all, both big and small.

The problem with living in a world limited by our various senses is that you cannot go beyond those senses directly. With our eyes we can see the things around us, but we cannot see the full spectrum of light. With our ears we can hear music, conversations, and even road traffic, but we cannot hear the subtle rumble of the earth as it shifts, or the tiniest insects as they fly on their various missions. With our noses we cannot smell the individual flowers of the field, each with their own scent all at the same time. We have built-in limits that give us enough to “live and move and have our being,” (*Acts 17:28) and yet we are fundamentally bound by those limits to be incapable of *naturally* knowing more.

We have supplemented our senses with instruments or taken advantage of the animal kingdom to provide what we ourselves cannot sense, and even that is a bit of faith to accept.

We have limits of knowledge so that we do not have to have limits of faith. It is by faith that we learn about the kingdom of God, and it is by faith that we can gain insight into the kingdom of God, and it is only by faith that we can please God. When faith leads to knowledge, faith becomes dormant in that thing. But with new knowledge, we learn more about what we don't know, and so our faith continues to build our base of knowledge as it becomes fulfilled.

What is your perspective? Do you believe that we will, without the intervention of God, learn all the secrets of the universe? Do you believe that with this increased knowledge that we alone can improve the condition of humanity on this earth – or even elsewhere?

We get mad in traffic, or we get frustrated with people, or we make silly mistakes (or worse) and oftentimes this is because we are unable to see the bigger picture. We get disaffected, insulted, abused, or even cast away and we become angry or bitter because we do not see things as having any positive elements. Not to belittle anyone who faces these things, but while bad things may happen to us, we do not have to become bad people in response. Rather, we are told not to let that happen.

We are trespassed against, or we trespass against others, and without a view to address those things for the better either through forgiveness or repentance (and not out of spite or a desire to cause harm) we find the world sinking into the pit that the adversary of our souls wants us to dig for him and us. The perspective we need to take is much higher than either the most petty jealousies or the most deeply hurt feelings. The Gospel of Christ is Good News because it is both true and because it gives us hope for something better. Something perfect.

It isn't always easy. Changing your way of thinking isn't easy.

Growing up with a need for eyeglasses to improve my vision since seventh grade, I could appreciate the clarity I would get whenever I would put them on. As my eyes changed I would need a new prescription so that I could continue to have that clarity. I often marveled at how, when looking in the distance, I would see the green outlines of trees, and then with my glasses on I could see individual leaves and the complexity of the branches. When I would go swimming, I would take my glasses off so I could swim, and always when finished I would put my glasses back on and it seemed even so much clearer than it was before I took them off.

I sometimes found the level of detail to be overwhelming if I had just gotten a new prescription or if I had been outside without my glasses for more than an hour or so. That is, while I could see so much more detail that I couldn't see before, it was a lot more information for me to process. I might technically "see" everything in more detail, but I wouldn't recognize all of those details at once until I could focus my attention on items individually. It took time to adjust to the new view that I had.

When you look at the surveillance photos taken by high altitude spy-planes during the cold war, they sometimes took imagery of a hundred thousand square miles during a single flight, but it took the skill and talents of experienced photo analysts to understand not just what they were seeing, but what it meant.

We have been given so much perspective on the world around us and yet we often miss what it means because we do not look at it with our spiritual eyes. My oft-repeated strain is to get the big picture first. Without the big picture view we do not have the means to fit the puzzle pieces together into their proper places. We often find our big picture view getting bigger as we realize that what we thought was important is less so, and things we thought were not important are most critical.

God has no limits, and his ways are indeed higher than our ways, and his thoughts are indeed higher than our thoughts. Keep looking for the truth and you will find Jesus waiting there for you.

*Acts 17

24 God, that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands,

25 Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things,

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation,

27 That they should seek the Lord if they are willing to find him; for he is not far from every one of us.

28 **For in him we live, and move, and have our being**, as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29 Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent,

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by him whom he hath ordained; and he hath given assurance of this unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.