

Lesson 4

Review from Previous Lessons: We have seen that a Christian must differentiate between information and revelation. The only way to be sure of how to do that, of course, is to recognize that the only completely trustworthy source of revelation is the Bible. It is the representation of the mind of God.

In addition, we have seen that differentiated representations have their **origin** in the unseen, eternal realm of God, that they carry **power** to affect the material world, and that they make His will **apparent**.

The next several lessons will give your students a very concrete and explanatory “tool” to demonstrate the seen and unseen aspects of reality, a “3-D Model of Reality” developed by Dr. Mike Strawn. (The actual model included with this lesson is from our Web master, Noel Green. It is downloadable on the Representational Resources site.) Before class, have copies of the 3-D model ready for the students (preferably printed on heavy paper, and folded down the middle to make a gable-like structure with “seen” on one side and “unseen” on the other.)

The Problem: Most Christians would acknowledge the existence of the eternal. However, it seems like a separate, unconnected concept – almost like a separate reality.

The Underlying Assumptions as Expressed in Everyday Terms:

1. What I can see and touch seems real, but an unseen God doesn't seem as real.
2. It's hard to make decisions as if unseen realities carried as much weight as things like illness, business matters, and personality conflicts. They demand my immediate attention.
3. I understand that believers like those listed in Hebrews chapter 11 made decisions based on things they couldn't see, but I don't know how to do that.
4. Even if I concede that the Bible is differentiated representations, what exactly does that have to do with my everyday life in areas the Bible apparently doesn't specifically mention?

Background Reading Before Teaching this Lesson: 2 Kings 6:8-20. Note carefully the nature of the differentiated representations of Elisha as compared to those of his servant. Make a list for yourself. In this passage, how do we see the **origin, power, and apparenacy** of the prophet's representations?

The Lesson

1. Read aloud James 1:8.
2. One problem that has plagued Christian thinkers is the erroneous impression that there are two realities: a “reality” here on earth and a “reality” where God exists. This erroneous thinking was identified in the book of James and

personified by the double-minded man of James 1:8. Such a man does not seek the wisdom of God but operates on two separate tracks in his thinking, resulting in instability in all he does. By trying to reconcile two separate realities in his mind, he ends up being what the Greek in this text calls "two-souled." The result: he does not get what he asks for in prayer, he is plagued by doubts and tossed around like a wave of the sea in his thinking.

3. The truth is that there is only one reality. One reality: but it has, at least at first glance, at least two parts. There is the part you see, and the part you do not see. We live here on this earth and are surrounded by the facts of our material existence, but there are other, invisible elements that are just as "real" as the ones we see. It can be compared to walking through your house at night during a power outage. With a flashlight, you can distinguish certain things, but even the things you cannot see at the moment must be counted as real as the things you can see—or you will surely stumble over that coffee table which is hidden in the shadows. There are not two houses: one that is dark and one that is partially illuminated. There is only one house, with parts you can see and parts you cannot; but all equally real.
4. Christians are urged throughout the Bible to operate on the basis that the unseen side of reality is just as relevant as the seen side. Consider the case of 2 Kings 6:8-20. Here we have the story of the prophet Elisha and his frightened servant in a besieged city. Elisha, who is accustomed to operating on the reality that is unseen, is not perturbed that the king of the Arameans has brought an army to surround the city and that from the visible aspect, things look grim. Elisha prays, "Lord, open the eyes of my servant so that he can see," and immediately the servant is able to see what others cannot: an angelic host greater than the physical, visible Aramean army. Here is an important truth in this story: the angelic army did not just spring into being for the benefit of Elisha's servant. They were there all along. They were as real as the Aramean army; in fact, they neutralized it. The only thing that changed was the servant's ability to see the angelic army.
5. Ephesians chapter 6, the great "armor of God" chapter, emphasizes this truth. Our battle, Paul tells us, is against invisible beings that are just as real as the visible elements here on earth. That which is invisible is not part of another reality; but part of a single reality. All Biblical role models of faith have this in common: they give more weight to the unseen realities revealed to them by God than they do to what they can see. They reject what would be termed "common sense" and give the wisdom of God precedence. For example: each person listed as a hero of faith in Hebrews chapter 11 operates on information not immediately available here on earth. It was revealed knowledge, given to them by God, a manifestation of His priorities and superior knowledge of the completeness of reality—which only He can reveal to us accurately. In fact, the ability to see the unseen actually gives one the ability to endure trial, as the example of Moses in Hebrews 11:27 shows us.

6. Consider another example. In Daniel chapter 3, Shadrach, Mesach, and Abednego were faced with a very real fiery furnace. After acknowledging the God they served and stating that they would not bow down to any substitute, they also conceded the reality of the furnace and that it could be possible that they would perish in it. But nonetheless, they would operate on the reality of God and give it precedence over the threats of the king and the realities of the furnace.
7. It was not just for first-century believers that Paul turns attention away from our human experience and affirms the truth of 2 Corinthians 4:18: ". . .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." A little later in chapter 5, he sums this up: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

Questions for Discussion with Class:

1. How does the passage in 2 Kings show origin, power, and apparency of Elisha's differentiated representations of the situation faced by him and his servant?
2. What, according to James, is the result of trying to operate on both differentiated and undifferentiated representations?
3. How does the James passage show the elements of origin, power and apparency?
4. Read the "armor of God" section of Ephesians 6. List the elements that show that reality has two aspects, but that there is only one reality.
5. What relationship does walking by faith but not by sight have to do with what we've discussed regarding information and revelation?
6. How could you use the 3-D Model of Reality to show a child that there are two sides to reality?

"Yeah, but. . . ."

It's hard to visualize the role of God in bridging the gap between the seen and the unseen. Come back next week and find some Scriptural answers to how that is done.