# Do You Really Need This?

## *Are You Better at Seeing or Believing?*

When the Lord called me into the ministry, I had a big decision to make. Where would I go get my college degree? I knew what my major would be. I was certain I needed to attend a Christian college but which one? I finally settled on Southwest Baptist University. However it was in Bolivar Missouri. I had no idea what sort of place Bolivar was and all I knew about the school was what I read in the college handbook. I was twenty-two when I arrived on campus. I had never been to the Midwest, let alone Missouri. I had no friends or family there, I did not know a single soul in Missouri, let alone at the college I was about to attend. Yet, I got on a plane and showed up at Southwest Baptist University, a new student. Without having ever seen the school or knowing a single person who had ever attended the college, I went…you might say blindly. It was only faith in Christ that He was leading me along this path that convinced me to go. Certainly I had no hard evidence pushing me along. And it turned out to be one of the best decisions in my life. Today we are going to look at the relationship between sight and faith and why faith is so important in your life. Here is the big idea. In the age of faith, trust Christ to save you because He will.

In our study of the Gospel of John we begin to enter the steady stream of eyewitness accounts of what Jesus actually did and some of the many people He met and whose lives He transformed. John 1 describes the early days of Jesus' three year public ministry and starts with His relationship with John the Baptist. Crowds flocked to John the Baptist's preaching and they were so mesmerized by his message that they assumed he was either the Messiah or one of the ancient prophets returned from the dead. He insisted he wasn't but that He was simply commissioned by God to bring people back to the Lord and then also to point them to the actual Messiah who was standing among all the people in the crowd. The Gospel tells us where this took place. **This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.** (John 1: 28 NIV) This is an important detail to consider. Both ancient and modern Bible scholars don't know where this Bethany was. It isn't the same Bethany where Lazarus and his sisters lived, which was a mere two miles from Jerusalem. This is some other Bethany, and many Bible scholars didn't believe it actually existed. They thought it was merely a symbolic name of a non-existent town. The truth is that many liberal scholars believed there were a number of places spoken of in the book of John that didn't exist because there was no historical record of them. Yet to their great shock, many unbelieving critics of the Bible have had to take back their words because archeologists have discovered a number of the places John talked about in his gospel that critics said did not exist.

Perhaps you did not know that most people in the US and Europe did not believe the Wright brothers flew a plane at Kitty Hawk. Scientists and journalists alike renounced the reports. They called the Wright brothers airplane a hoax and mocked the accounts of the flights. When Wilbur and Orville Wright tried to sell the rights to the design of their airplane to world governments, nobody was interested. The US flat turned down the opportunity and so did England. France and Germany were the only nations that showed any interest in finding out more about it but even they would only consider purchasing the rights if they could not see firsthand the airplane successfully fly. Wilbur agreed to have an airplane of theirs shipped to France for a demonstration there and Orville brought another one to Washington D.C. to show the people there what the plane could do. Crowds roared in awe as they watched Wilbur Wright fly, making turns and even doing figure eights in the sky. Leaders from all over Europe came and gawked as Wilbur Wright showed off his airplane, the crowd yelled and cheered as they watched Wilbur Wright fly. It was the most amazing thing they had ever seen. Not much later Orville flew in Washington D.C. in front of vast crowds of stunned and amazed spectators. Soon Wilbur and Orville Wright were lauded all over the world for their accomplishment and they were celebrated everywhere as two of the greatest men of their time. Almost no one would accept by faith the great miracle of flight that took place at Kitty Hawk. But when they saw it with their own eyes, they knew it was true.

There are two ages that come and go. One is the age of sight and the other the age of faith. The age of sight was in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve literally walked with God. And then it came again as Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. There have been other times in history when it was an age of sight for pockets of people, but the most famous and attested time of sight took place as John the Baptist turned over his ministry to Jesus. He did not tell the crowds to just believe Jesus was the Messiah. He told them to see for themselves. **The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!** (John 1: 29 NIV) The physical evidence was there and John the Baptist pointed it out to anyone willing to look. Later John pointed Jesus out to two of His disciples, encouraging them to find out for themselves Jesus was the Savior of the world. **The**

**next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"** (John 1: 35-36 NIV) When the two disciples came to Jesus, He told them to consider the evidence of who He is. **"Come," he replied, "and you will see."** (John 1: 39a NIV) Phillip, another disciple who chose to see if Jesus was the Messiah went and invited his friend Nathanael to check out Jesus and find out like he had that Jesus was the one predicted by the prophets to come and save the world. But there was one problem. In Nathanael's mind Jesus' hometown was a shabby little village. **"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.** (John 1: 46 NIV) In the age of seeing, Philip had a simple response. Come and see for yourself. To find out who God was and what He was like, all you had to do was go to Jesus and see. Listen to what Jesus had to say. Watch would He did. As Christ pointed out, even if those around Him didn't believe what He taught, there were plenty of miracles He did for them to see. **But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."** (John 10: 38 NIV) It is stupendous that even in the age of sight, many did not believe in Jesus. The evidence was there, physically available, but still many decided they could not accept Him as God in flesh, the Savior of the world.

Today we live in the age of faith. It seems like it would be so wonderful to live in the age of sight. Yet, even Adam and Eve found the age of sight not enough to sway them toward true Godliness. Just think about the crowds of people who wanted to return to the slavery of Egypt after witnessing all of the miracles of God both in Egypt and in the desert. Jesus insisted it is better to live in the age of faith than in the age of sight. After Thomas confessed the reality that Jesus was Lord and raised from the dead, Jesus made this declaration. **Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** (John 20: 29 NIV) We don't see the miracles. We don't hear the literal voice of Jesus talking to us. We don't sit with Christ as He turns the water into wine or teaches on the mountainside. We live in the age of faith, not sight, and that is good. We get to practice faith at its most honored and celebrated levels. We are able to walk by faith and not sight, something the angels cannot do, something Moses could not do and Jesus' disciples could not do. As Paul proudly proclaimed, **We live by faith, not by sight.** (2 Corinthians 5: 7 NIV) There is no greater honor in heaven than to live by faith and not by sight, to trust in Christ even when everything seems to point that you cannot count on Him.

I am reminded of the great Hebrew king Jehoshaphat who faced a terrible threat. A vast army, comprised of three nations came up against Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. In great alarm, Jehoshaphat gathered the people of Jerusalem together and they prayed for the Lord to deliver them. Jehoshaphat admitted that they were completely dependent on God. **We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you."** (2 Chronicles 20: 12 NIV) Have you ever felt that way? You don't know what to do but you have put your hope in Jesus to show you what to do. A prophet then, having heard from the Lord when the Spirit came upon Him, told Jehoshaphat and the people to not be afraid, that the Lord would surely deliver them. The Lord made it clear that their victory would not be due to the fighting skills of the army of Judah, but the Lord would destroy the enemy. Here is where it is fascinating, this step of faith Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah took. Rather than positioning their fiercest and best equipped fighters at the head of the army, Jehoshaphat had worship leaders up at the front leading all the men in songs of worship and praise. And they all sang, **"Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever."** (2 Chronicles 20: 21b NIV) That is living by faith and not by sight and it is the most glorious thing a Christian can do.

You may argue that you don't have a prophet like Jehoshaphat did guiding you. No, you don't. You have something much better. You have the word of God.and it is clear. The age of faith means that you may not see the evidence of God but by faith you know He is so and you can trust Him. This is His word to you in the age of faith. **And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.** (Philippians 4: 19 NIV) Then there is this. **For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.** (Jeremiah 29: 11 NIV) And this. **So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.** (Isaiah 41: 10 NIV) It is the age of faith and you are just the person God is talking to when He says, "Trust me." Here is our big idea. In the age of faith, trust Christ to save you because He will.