

John 6:30–31

³⁰ Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?”

³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

“Seeing Is Believing” John 6:30-31

INTRO:

Why is it so hard for us to believe? This question jumps to the forefront of our minds as we listen to the Lord’s discussion with the group who ate the loaves and then crossed the Sea of Galilee to find Him. Remember, that instead of praising them for their initiative, He rebuked them. ***“Jesus answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.’”*** (verse 25) The Lord Jesus did not welcome them or encourage them, instead He challenged their priorities. They sought Him out for the free lunch. He then challenged them to believe on Him. ***“Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”***

These committed seekers were not going to be put off so easily. If this Jesus wanted them to seriously consider that He is the one in whom they were to believe, He was going to have to give them undeniable proof. So, they respond in **verse 30**, ***“What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?”*** Here then is the problem. They will not believe what they cannot see. As we explore these two verses, we will see them under two heads.

I. The Problem of Seeing in Order to Believe

II. The Importance of Believing So That We Can See

I. The Problem of Seeing in Order to Believe

A. We read in **verses 30-31**, ***“Therefore they said to Him, ‘What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”***

1. It was one thing to seek Him out as a practical answer to their constant struggle to get food. It was quite another to embrace Him as ***“the One whom God sent.”*** What precisely they understood by this phrase is debatable. Still, it is clear that the minimum they understood Him to mean was that they needed to commit themselves to Him as the Messiah whom God sent. Jesus required more than simple assent. He asked them to embrace who He was and all that follows from that reality.

2. Before they would believe, they made a demand of their own. Notice the emphases in the text.

“Therefore they said to Him, ‘What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?’”

(1) What sign will You do? **(2)** We want to see it before we decide whether we will believe or not. Tell us, what work will you do? **(3)** Something like what Moses did in the wilderness would be sufficient. (We could do with forty years of free meals!)

B. They had a couple of problems. First, they thought they were the ones in control of this situation. We are willing to listen to your offer of being king of our lives, but it better be good or we will look elsewhere.

1. Many years ago, C. S. Lewis wrote a perceptive essay entitled *“God in the Dock.”* He wrote, *“The ancient man approached God (or even gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge and God is in the dock. [Man] is quite a kindly judge: if God should have a reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty, and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may end in God’s acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the bench (the judge) and God is in the dock (the accused).”*

2. This is not an affliction from which modern mankind alone suffers. Evidently, people of all periods of history fall into this trap. **Romans 9:20-21** puts this in proper perspective. ***“O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”***

C. Second, they did not **‘see’** the signs that Jesus had already done for them. Did you notice the word **“sign”** in this chapter?

1. Look at **verses 2, 14, and 26**. The crowd originally made the trek out to the wilderness because they liked the miracles Jesus did! When they saw the sign that He did in providing their food, they were ready to make Him king. It is one thing to have a King who can provide all that we need. It is something entirely different to commit to Him as the One who is God’s Messiah and who is supposed to rule their lives. Finally, when they followed Him, Jesus said it wasn’t because they saw the signs and believed. It was for purely self-serving reasons.

2. Why could they not see the signs? The answer is something that Jesus said later in **John 9:39-41**. ***“Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.’”***

Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, ***‘Are we blind also?’*** Jesus said to them, ***“If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘we see.’ Therefore your sin remains.”*** They were blinded by their sin and unbelief and they could not see the truth in the miracles Jesus did.

D. Third, they had the same problem that all of us have. No matter how much evidence God provides, no matter how many miracles Jesus does, it is never enough for us to believe.

1. It is not that God asks us to believe without any evidence at all. Faith is not a leap in the dark.

2. Remember when Philip said in **John 14**,
“Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” (verses 8-11)

II. The Importance of Believing So That We Can See

A. Having diagnosed the crowd's problem, let us turn the coin over and see if we can't find a blessing here.

1. Alexander MacLaren wrote: *“People say, ‘Seeing is believing.’ I should be disposed to turn the aphorism right round, and to say, ‘Believing is seeing.’”*

2. MacLaren wrote about the eyes of our faith. When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ in our salvation, we come barely understanding what is going on. We understand that we are sinners and we need a Savior. We understand that the way we are saved is by receiving Him by faith. So, we believe and we are saved. But then something wonderful happens. As we grow in grace and in relationship with our Savior a whole new world opens up to us and we begin to see through the eyes of our faith a reality we never realized existed.

B. We do not have time to develop this fully but let me whet your appetite with a passage from the Hall of Faith, **Hebrews 11**.

1. **Hebrews 11:13-16** *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”*

2. There are three things here. First, our spiritual forefathers saw the promises through the eyes of their faith. Through faith, they embraced these promises and made them their own.

3. Second, seeing and embracing these realities changed their lives! They could not live as they had always lived. Instead, their lives reflected their relationship with the living God.

4. Third, God is not ashamed to be associated with them and He will give them the promises they saw and embraced. Does this describe us? Are we living in this world of darkness as Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, and Joseph did? Is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob our God also?

Hymn #405 *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*