

Divine Optometry

For those of us whose vision is less than 20/20, we may have had to go through an annual series of tests known as your annual eye exam check up. One of the machines which is most interesting is the one that is near the end where they try to find the exact prescription which works for you.

So the optometrist will place this giant machine with dozens of different lenses in front of your eyes and continually ask you two questions: 'which is clearer, this lens or that lens?' He will continue to do this until you get the right prescription. You can potentially find out at the end that a letter which looked like an Q is actually a W!

The type of lens you look at can determine the type of image you see. So when it comes to reading the bible or reading this particular passage from Genesis on Noah, which lens are you using?

Jesus in the Gospel today reveals that there are two ways, two lenses by which you can see and understand.

The first lens is what I call the blurry, New Atheist lens. We are in a day and age where we can read the bible through the eyes of the New Atheists. Referring to the Old Testament God, Richard Dawkins once said that God is a "pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."

The New Atheists will typically read the Old Testament without understanding the structure of the story in the Old Testament and in the New. What they do not realize is God is gradually unveiling a plan of salvation that is not complete but preparing the people for something greater. In other words, he is preparing them for a New Testament, a New Lens to understand all of scripture. However, all that the New Atheists see is a blurry image just like that man saw blurry images of trees and then they claim that that is who God is, our understanding is the fullness of truth.

In contrast to the blurry, New Atheist lens, we have the lens of the Church where we can receive 20/20 vision. The lens of the Church is nothing else but Jesus Christ. Notice in the Gospel that after Jesus lays his hands on the eyes of the blind man, the blind man looks intently and his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly. By looking intently at the Scriptures through Jesus, we will see the Scriptures more clearly.

The Church teaches that Jesus himself “completed and perfected Revelation” (Dei Verbum 4). She can say this because Jesus himself said that to see him is to see the Father (cf Jn 14:9). The Son of God came down from heaven, came down from the bosom of the Father to reveal to us the mystery of the Father’s will, the mystery of his plan for us. And what is his plan for us? That we should be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

So Jesus is like that last puzzle piece that makes sense of the image or on wheel of fortune you need that last letter to make sense of the whole word. Jesus reveals to us the deeper mystery of what the flood stands for and it is that God doing an act of re-creation to make all things new again. The chaotic flood over the whole earth resembles the chaotic formlessness at the beginning of creation. Ultimately, the flood waters point to the waters of baptism where sin is destroyed and new life is given, where we become a new creation to be partakers of the divine nature.

We who are lower than the angels are given the privilege to share in God’s own nature, to truly be called children of God not in any metaphorical or poetic sense but in a real and literal way. For the blood that runs through the Father’s Son beats through my heart; the Spirit that allows Jesus to cry ‘Abba! Father’ now also moves through our cries.

Ultimately, we have a choice everyday to decide which lens we want to use to interpret our life. We can choose to use the blurry, New Atheist lens where we see God as vindictive tyrant or we can choose to see with the lens of the Church and stare intently at Jesus who reveals to us a Father who holds nothing, nothing back from us even his own divine life. So which is better, this lens or that lens?