

The Eyes of the Lord

Proverbs 15:3

“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” - Proverbs 15:3.

Interestingly, discussion of the phrase “the eyes of the Lord” is a major theme in Proverbs: the Lord knows the actions and hearts of all, so he is neither pleased with nor fooled by one who offers sacrifices while continuing in the way of wickedness (cf. vv. 8–9, 11, 26, 29). This phrase appears (sometimes minus the “the”) some 20x in the whole of the OT and 1x (1 Pet. 3:12) in the NT. It inevitably the result of having a relationship (or a call from) with God and thus, the vesting of some result as a result. This is what we could call a “specific” sense of the watchfulness of God. But there is also what some have called a “Synthetic” sense as well. David, for instance proclaims that God watches over the “sheep of His Pasture” and other like statements. It can also be understood to refer to the perpetual and ongoing care that God exercise over His people. (Deut. 11:12; Joel 3:2).

The chief idea used in the phrase, of course is that of seeing or watching. There is no implication of the physicality of God or the possession of actual, physical eyes on His part. Rather, He sees with the greater sense of the awareness that is a part of His omniscience. Because this “sight” is omnipresent (as God is) it is frequently used to be the very definition of what is good and acceptable in His “sight”. And so, it is safe, I think, to understand the phrase, as I have said, as a reference to God’s omniscience.

¹² *a land for which the LORD your God cares; **the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it**, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year. (Deuteronomy 11:12)*

² *I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land. (Joel 3:2)*

Now, as a matter of further consideration, we should ask the question of just what is it that this phrase is speaking of?

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They are “in every place”, which is difficult to misunderstand. There can be few other ways in which to see the phrase. We ought to see it as a continuation of the idea of omniscience we spoke of earlier. The phrasing of the

idea taught here implies a real place, though perhaps not a literal, physical place. There is no place, David says, where one can go to hide or escape from the seeing awareness of our Lord, where God will not witness our actions.

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“Beholding” simply refers to the idea of keeping watch or guarding a thing to see, to scan, to look over whatever it is that happens. The point is not so much that God is watching each of us but that He is watching and aware no matter where and/or what goes on. Remember that we understand this to be speaking of God’s omnipresence and thus see this to be saying that is constantly aware of whatever goes on in His creation.

Many want to think that God watches “me” and there is surely a sense in which this is true. But the larger sense is the idea that God watches, He scans or is aware of all that is happening. The word translated “every” is one that refers to the whole of a matter as opposed to the individual parts. Again, we note that it is not so much each individual part of the creation that God watches, but the whole of the creation that is under His scrutiny.

David goes on and points out that this is not a matter of God performing the function of a guard or one who watches a door to see that no one enters or leaves, so to speak. Rather it is saying that God keeps an eye on each action, good and evil, that occurs in His creation. We can see that this has bearing on the fact that all men in that creation will give account for his or her actions, good or evil while they dwell in God’s creation. “The phrase “...the evil and the good” underscores this for us makes this a bit more general for us. It tells us that God scans or watches to see each action, good or evil and sees each person that does such good and/or evil.

The word for evil is used throughout the OT to speak of a number of ideas, from wickedness to the more general thought of the character idea of one who is characterized by it and is thus “wicked”. It can also speak of things that are bad, bad for you, that bring trouble your way, and even the idea of things that harm the body and make one “sore” for instance. “Good” here speak of moral good and mostly is used to speak of things that are pleasing to God and in obedience to His Word and commands. It assuredly is not talking about the doing of things that are simply pleasing to other men or beneficial to themselves or others.

The point here is that God is actively aware of all that occurs, be it wicked or harmful to self or others, obedient or disobedient to He and His Word or commands. The obvious point here is that, with regard to wisdom and the better way to live a life, we need to remember that God sees all and knows all and that we will one day give account for our performance, evil or good. It is the “wise” course to remember this and to live our lives in accordance to what we know to be true and to what the results, spiritually will be.

Just to rehearse our interpretation here - In adaptation to human understanding, the omniscience of the Deity is here and elsewhere compared to

eyes—“seven eyes,” (the translation in some versions) indicating perfectness (2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 4:10). They are said to observe, to examine, to behold (as from a watch-tower) the evil and the good everywhere. The doctrine has both its alarming and its comfortable side, but as it is intended first *to warn*, “the evil” are first spoken of.

By way of Illustration we can remember:

- We know that the omniscient eye of God observed our first parents in the garden.
- Likewise, it saw Joseph and Manasseh in prison,
- It saw Achan within his tent, Hezekiah on his sick-bed, Nebuchadnezzar in his palace, the three youths in the furnace,
- We know it even saw Jonah in the whale,
- Over in the NT, it is fair to remember that it saw Nathanael under the fig-tree,
- God’s eyes saw Peter up on the housetop,
- It saw wicked Herod on his throne,
- It is fair to say that those eyes saw Lydia by the river-side,
- It surely saw Paul in the tempest and before Nero, St. John in exile.

Thinking of the matter of application - It is evident from Holy Scripture that nothing escapes the penetrating eye of God. He sees not only every man, but all his doings and all his thoughts. As our Governor, above all as our Judge, it is essential all should be “naked and open” to His Eyes. He must know all, that He may “rule in righteousness” and “judge righteous judgment.” Man in his sinfulness would prefer an impersonal God, would make of the machinery of Nature a God which he might observe without being himself observed. But the proofs of God’s all-seeing Eye are too irrefutable, and conscience bears witness to It too feelingly, to allow of there being as much atheism spoken as is acted. Yet the inner spirit of the guilty, until reconciled, is atheistic, and he saith with Job’s adulterer, “No eye shall see me” (Job 24:15). The same man would call upon God in time of danger. So easy is it to own omniscience and yet live “without God.” But, indeed, the thought of the all-seeing Eye is too terrible, when realized, to be endured unless we recognize in It the beamings of compassionate love. Am I, in the spirit of adoption, able to look up to God and cry, “Abba, Father”? Then, while the certainty that at every moment “Thou, God, seest me,” will make me watchful not to offend, in private as well as in public, in the church, in the counting-house, in the shop, in the street, wherever I am, it will not fill me with dismay. For I shall remember that He sees “the good” as well as “the evil,” and will reward the honest effort of His child to be good. He sees my faults. He sees my repentance also. He sees me “in the Beloved,” and accepts me for His sake.