

## The Eyes

In his reflections as he came to the conclusion of his afflictions, Job remarks, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." (verse 42:5) These remarks open to us a new vista of understanding concerning another one of our abilities to know God. When we hear, we hear the word of Lord; but if we look, we can actually see the Lord Himself! Tragically, there are many hindrances which keep us from actually seeing Him as we need to. Like Adam in the Garden, we may simply not want to see Him. (Genesis. 3: 10) Or, like Isaiah in his encounter with God which awaked him to wickedness which poured from his lips, we are afraid that seeing God may sentence us to judgment for our unrighteousness. (Isaiah 6:5) Perhaps we are like Manoah and his wife who feared that such a divine encounter would take their very lives. (Judges 13:22)

The more common malady, however, is the simple fact that all of us are blind to one degree or another. I think that we have all taken color blindness tests where numbers are arranged in patterns of similarly colored dots. Depending upon the degree of color blindness we suffer, we will be able to pick out the hidden numbers on some of the pseudo-isochromatic plates but not be able to distinguish the pattern on others. This physical test helps give us a little insight into the spiritual reality of what Jesus meant when He explained that He taught in parables because some people had eyes to see and others did not. Just as we all look at the same dot patterns yet not all of us can see the hidden numbers, only the ones who have enlightened eyes will be able to see the message inside the story.

And he spake many things unto them in parables...Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is

waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. (Matthew 13:3-16)

When Jesus made His statement about having eyes but not being able to see, He was quoting Isaiah 6: 9-12, a significant Old Testament passage which is repeated at least four times in the New Testament (Matthew 13:14, John 12:39, Acts 28:24-29, Romans 11:7-8) Perhaps we can begin to unravel the mystery as to why we are often unable to see even though we have seemingly perfectly good eyes by looking at a couple of clues Paul left us in his first letter to the Corinthians. In verses thirteen and fourteen of chapter two, he tells us that spiritual things are only discerned spiritually.

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Notice the marked distinction between two contrasting worlds of reality -- the natural and the spiritual. In the natural realm, we get human teaching; in the spiritual realm, we get teaching from the Holy Ghost. Paul goes on to say that those who are part of the natural order are unable receive the truths of the spiritual realm -- and, in fact, consider them to be foolishness. In the previous chapter of this same letter, Paul had already pointed out that the wisdom of the gospel is foolishness to the unregenerated. To them, it is foolishness to love your enemy or to give when you are in need. However, as he pointed out in the early part of chapter two, this same message which is foolish to the unsaved is wisdom to redeemed -- a wisdom that is hidden until we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of

this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (verses 2:4-10)

In his second epistle to this same church, Paul gives two reasons why we have eye problems. The first cause is that our eyes are blinded and the gospel hidden from us by the devil.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (verses 4:3-4)

Remember Nicodemus' clandestine interview with Jesus in which he wanted to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; he was shocked to learn that it is impossible to even see the divine kingdom without being born again. (John 3:3) Nicodemus did not understand natural, much less spiritual, things. The god of this world has done such a good job of blinding the eyes of his subjects that they cannot see the kingdom which is presently among them. (Luke 11:20)

The second reason the apostle listed is even more tragic: we have voluntarily put a veil over our eyes. It is one thing to be blinded by an antagonistic force, but it is a totally different matter to willingly blindfold ourselves to avert our attention from the illuminating light of God. In Exodus chapter thirty-four, we read the story of how the people of Israel asked Moses to place a veil over his face to filter out the blinding glow on his countenance when he descended from his mountaintop sojourn with God. Paul explains the spiritual ramifications of their request.

And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the

children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (verses 3:13-18)

God not only shows us the condition and its cause, He also reveals the cure. In His message to the seven churches of Revelation, the Risen Lord confronted the Laodicean church because they saw themselves as healthy, wealthy, and wise. Jesus, on the other hand, recognized them as needing eye salve to correct their blindness. (Revelation 3:18) The context of His message to the church reveals that this healing is actually repentance -- the only cure for both blindness caused by the diabolic work of our enemy and the induced blindness resulting from our own willful actions!

If the first step to the remedy is repentance, the subsequent step must be to use what vision we have been given. Remember that Jesus said that His reasoning for teaching in parables was because some were not given the ability to see. To the unregenerated Pharisees, He gave no parables; instead, He pointedly told them to repent. (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3, 5) It was to the disciples who were beginning to see properly that He addressed the parables and even agreed to give some explanation of them. When Jesus began to explain the parable of the sower to these disciples, He added that the ones who had such ability would be given even more. (Matthew 13:12) They were the fertile soil in which just one seed of the gospel could germinate and produce thirty, sixty, or even one hundred revelations. In a subsequent discourse, Jesus emphasized the point.

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. (Matthew 25:29)

Our ability for spiritual insight will increase if we put it to use. In Acts chapter three, we read the story about the first miracle healing though

the church after the Lord's ascension. It is interesting to note the various verbs used to describe the action of seeing. In verse three, the lame man is referred to as "seeing" Peter and John as they neared the temple. The next verse says that Peter "fastening his eyes" on the invalid and commanded that he "look on" the apostles. Notice the progression in the intensity of the verbs. When the lame man was only seeing he had no spiritual insight and remained subject to his crippling condition. When the apostle fastened his eyes on the beggar, he focused his attention in a way that he had never done before. It is certain that Peter had noticed this man many times as he had gone in and out of the temple over the years; however, today was different -- there was a purposeful awareness that had never been there before. Finally, the afflicted man was directed to look -- an action verb conveying purpose and expectant anticipation. That look of faith brought the man out of his physical dimension into the spiritual reality where he was able to receive his miracle. The author of the book of Hebrews also directs us to move from simply seeing the host of faithful witnesses to taking a purposeful focused look at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. (verses 12:1-2) The implication is that deliberate and purposeful focusing of our spiritual attention can enhance our ability to see into the things of the spirit realm. Hebrews 5:14 declares that we can develop our senses, suggesting our hearing and our sight, by purposefully using them. If we have become blinded by deliberately placing a veil over our eyes, certainly we can undo that deficiency by concentrated focus.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Paul even numbered himself among those who had limited clarity in his vision when he testified in I Corinthians 13:12 that we (including himself) see through a "glass darkly," but he also proclaimed that there was a day coming when he would "see face to face." His point was that we can anticipate total revelation at the final resurrection; however, that resurrection power is already working in and through us today. (Ephesians 3:20) Additionally, we have the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our present lives as a foretaste of the power of that kingdom to come; therefore, we can expect to begin to get clarity of vision as the Holy Spirit enlightens our present understanding. (I Corinthians 2:10) That is why Paul dedicated himself to praying for the church to receive the Holy Spirit's impartation for spiritual vision.

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1:16-18)

Another application of eye salve comes in a bottle labeled “forgiveness.” According to the beloved disciple John, our eyes can be blinded by walking in unforgiveness toward those around us.

He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walkth in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. (I John 2:9-11)

One of the characters in the movie Patch Adams was a patient in a mental institution whose characteristic behavior was to get into the face of each person he met, hold two fingers in front of him, and demand, “How many fingers do you see?” Of course everyone thought that he was crazy because of this erratic behavior; however, Patch Adams eventually realized what the gentleman was up to. When Patch looked beyond the fingers and gazed at the man himself, the fingers got out of focus. Suddenly, he saw four -- not two -- fingers! The point of the object lesson was that we need to learn to look at the people whom God places in our lives rather than at the problems they may cause us. If we continue to focus on the problems, we will never see the people as God wants us to see them -- we are blinded and walk in darkness. From my own personal experience, I can testify to the power of changing the way we see others. As a graduate student in seminary, my major professor became more of a tormentor rather than the mentor he was supposed to be. Every encounter I had with him was a confrontation rather than a confirmation. It seemed that he saw his mission in life as hindering rather than helping me earn my degree. No matter how hard I tried, the situation didn't seem to improve. That is, until the day he made an off-the-cuff statement that let me see into his personal self. I realized that he was having trouble at home and that he was bringing his frustrations and anxieties from home to the office. Apparently, I had

become the brunt of his emotional release. When I realized what was happening, I mentioned to him that I was going to pray for him and his family. Instantly, his attitude changed and our working relationship took a one-eighty! Magic? No, the blessing of God because I got my vision in proper alignment. From the moment I started praying for him rather than about him, I was seeing him the way God wanted me to see him. When I was able to stop seeing him as a problem and begin to see that he had a problem, I began to see him from the viewpoint of God.

I love the Agatha Christy and Sherlock Holmes stories where the detective sees what everyone else overlooks. The detective has the ability to see the clues that are hidden in plain sight. Sometimes that extra insight can be the difference between life and death. When God wrote a personal memo on the wall of the Babylonian banquet hall, the devil and all his sorcerers demonstrated their lack of spiritual insight when they tried to read the words which were written plainly before their faces. *Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin* to them was a list of the coins in circulation in their empire. They could not go beyond the surface meaning of the names of their coinage. Certainly the Almighty was interested in more than just pocket change in His personal visit with the leaders of this great world empire. Only Daniel -- with his ability to understand what everyone else was simply seeing -- was able to see that the name of each coin also had a second meaning. Just as our term “nickel” means a five-cent coin but also names a kind of metal, *mene* meant “to measure” in addition to naming their currency. Just as our term “quarter” means “one fourth” in addition to naming our twenty-five-cent coin, *tekel* had a second meaning of “to weight.” Like our term “half” signifies the fifty-cent coin as well as meaning “fifty percent,” *pharsin* [*u* is the term for “and”] meant “to divide” as well as designating a monetary value. The terms *mene* and *pharsin* also seemed to suggest the rising empire of the Medes and Persians. All this revelation was “as plain as the handwriting on the wall” to the magicians, but they were blinded from it.

The most tragic of all shortsightedness would be failing to be able to see God when He is present and active in our lives.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? (John 14:8-9)

As both a preventative and a curative measure for this kind of spiritual blindness, the Word of God continually commands us to make a point to diligently and purposefully seek God. The popular promise in II Chronicles 7:14 for those who seek the face of God is that He hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. The twenty-fourth Psalm sums up the description of those who seek the Lord as having clean hands and a pure heart and being in line for blessings and righteousness from their God. (verses 4-6)

Whether we will be able to see the Lord depends on the condition of our heart. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8) Certainly, the pure in heart will see God in “the sweet by and by” of our eternal abode, but the truth is that we can begin to see Him in the “bitter here and now” of our temporal residence. Moses had this privilege (Exodus 33:11), but this provision was extended to all the people of God as well.

And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. (Numbers 14:14)