

Opening the Windows of Heaven

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In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:11-12).

It is interesting to know that heaven has windows, but unlike those found on earth, they appear to be channels of communication. The text is rendered "floodgates" in the marginal reading. Among men, windows have two main purposes. They permit the entrance of light and provide a way of looking at the immediate surroundings. Buildings without windows are vaults, useful only for storage. Whether or not God's country possesses windows of the type known upon earth may be debatable. God knew they would be necessary among humans and instructed Noah to place a window into the first ship ever constructed. This is generally believed to have been an opening that extended all around the vessel just beneath the overhanging roof. Light was thus provided within the entire vessel and ventilation made possible for every part of the ship. The Bible explains that devastation came upon the earth when God opened "the floodgates" of heaven.

Scholars now suggest that a change in the temperature of the earth released enough water from the North and South poles to cover the earth when "the fountains of the deep were unstopped." Human intelligence cannot explain all the details of the ancient catastrophe. Did God have widespread lakes in His country, and were these released through the "floodgates"? Beyond this, everything is conjecture.

The Law Condemning... How Serious

There are five important Scriptures in which the windows of heaven are mentioned. Ezekiel supplies other references that prove windows were known during his generation. Each of the five outstanding examples has its own significance, but when considered together they provide a progression of thought which, to say the least, is informative. Throughout the ages the story of Noah's ark has commanded attention and stimulated action. During the centuries liberal theologians dismissed the account as the product of imaginative writers. Then data was forthcoming that refuted the critics. The archaeologists found clay tablets that endorsed the Bible story and as a result, expeditions went to Mount Ararat in Turkey to seek the remains of Noah's ark. These efforts were hindered by the authorities who refused to grant permission for exploration on the mountain. Remarkable reproductions of the clay tablets and relevant data can be found in the Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible.

The Bible states the ancient catastrophe was a judgment on the immoral conduct of people who were filling the earth with corruption. God opened the windows of heaven to terminate their evil practices. Long afterward, Paul wrote: "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

Many years ago I worked with a man who had recently retired from the Metropolitan Police Force in London, England. Frederick Dawes was a very fine Christian who belonged to a party of itinerant preachers. One night, I heard this brother describing how he was sent to guard a meeting in London where a nationally known atheist was to address a large gathering. My friend confessed he wanted to go into the building and drag the infidel from the platform. Yet, he had to prevent others from doing what he himself desired. During that meeting an usher rushed out to say

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the speaker had suffered a heart attack and died. The apostle Paul was correct when he wrote: "God is not mocked."

The Love Continuing. . How Sublime

Then said the LORD unto Moses. Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day. that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no (Exod. 16:4).

God's Ability

The account of how God rained down enormous supplies of manna in the wilderness is one of the most intriguing stories in the Bible. There were at least two million travelers who, 50 we are told, were fed twice a day. The Supplier provided four million meals every day for forty years! Allowing for the ten extra days used for what we call leap years, over the entire period the Lord provided 58 billion. 140 million meals. An average family of parents with two

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children living today would need to live to be over 13 million years old before the supply could be exhausted. It seems ludicrous to play with figures such as these, but at least they demonstrate the amazing capability of God to minister to the need of His people. (See also "Eating Angels' Food" in this volume.)

God's Affection

More amazing than the continuing provision was the affection of God. The people whom He fed were rebellious and critical. It has often been claimed that "necessity is the mother of invention," and this was evident during World War II when food was in short supply in Britain. Small amounts became available at intervals, and the diet might have become intensely monotonous had not the women of the country devised ways to make a variety of appetizing meals. It seemed miraculous when they made apple pie without apples! The women of ancient Israel were equally inventive, for some of them baked the manna, and others made all kinds of desserts. God supplied the basic ingredient. but He was not a Heavenly Restaurateur supplying meals for lazy people. They had work to do, and when they did it they were satisfied; others who did not cooperate continued to complain, Yet the manna fell regularly, for the Lord never failed to honor His promise. The question may be asked: "What if He had ceased to care for His people?"

God `s Abundance

It was never revealed how the heavenly food was made. Did the Almighty create or manufacture it? Speculation may lead to error, but it is safe to suggest that if God's angelic servants had any part in the production, the operators were always busy. Would it be wise to say that when the new generation of Hebrews entered the Promised Land, the angels enjoyed a well-deserved vacation? The ancient story proves the Lord can complete anything He commences.

The Lepers Convincing... How Startling

Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD. Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes. but shalt not eat thereof (2 Kings 7:1-2).

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The inhabitants of the city of Samaria were in great distress: they were dying of starvation. The army of Benhaddad, the king of Syria, had surrounded the place. and apparently there was no escape.

And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son (2 Kings 6:26-29).

Anxious parents were worried: their children were crying for food, and only the prophet Elisha remained calm as he sat with the elders of the city. Elsewhere the position was desperate. Benhaddad was a merciless enemy! Then suddenly the man of God predicted the famine was about to end, and within hours food would be plentiful. The prophet appeared to be absurd: his prediction was preposterous! When one of the noblemen heard this message, he sneered and said such a thing would only be possible if the Almighty opened windows in heaven. Probably he was very sarcastic, otherwise Elisha would not have pronounced his doom. "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof,"

Jehovah could have opened windows in heaven, but that was unnecessary. Instead he opened a door on earth. The invading armies of Syria had brought sufficient food for their army to continue the siege almost indefinitely. There was no need for supplies to be sent from heaven, when they were already close to the city.

Four lepers were in a terrible predicament. Leprosy had banished them from society, and surrender to the enemy meant certain death.

And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If

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we say. We will enter into the city. then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come. and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live: and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria. behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites. and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and tied in the twilight. and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life (2 Kings 7:3-7).

The lepers were mystified; they had come to seek mercy, but the enemy had disappeared! At first they thought it might be a trap. but when they explored the outermost part of the camp, they discovered the Syrians had made a hurried departure. The starving men ate some of the abandoned food, but then said, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. When the citizens of Samaria heard the men's story, they were delighted until the unbelieving monarch suggested they might become victims of the wiles of the enemy. As the hope of the people began to wane, an unknown soldier courageously challenged the king's advice, declaring it would be folly

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to reject the message without first putting it to the test. He advised that volunteers be sought who would ascertain if the good news were true. When the young men went to the Syrian camp, they also found evidence that something had scared the enemy, and food was ready to be eaten. The Samaritans rushed to the gate of the city, and the sarcastic nobleman was trampled to death.

The Lord Commending,, How Stimulating

It is generally accepted that Malachi ministered after the return of the exiles from captivity. His words were spoken to Hebrews who were confronted by immense problems. They had to earn a living and build homes for their families. Meanwhile, priests and other religious leaders were appealing for money to complete the temple and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. People were reluctant to pay their tithe when personal debts remained. To present an offering to the Lord was reasonable, but to pay one tenth of their total income seemed an imposition. To such people God said:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith. saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing. that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).

The laws regarding tithing were strict and exact: they referred to money, produce of the fields and many other things. The proceeds supported the priesthood and other religious activities. The Egyptians gave to Pharaoh two-tenths of their income (Gen. 47:24) but in Israel the tithe was only one-half of that amount. Probably it was easier for the Egyptians to meet the king's demand, for under the guidance of Joseph, even the peasants were prosperous. The tithe was mentioned early in history, for when Abraham met Melchizedek he gave tithes to him (Gen. 14:18-20). Throughout history tithing was considered to be an essential part of worship. It was not difficult to give money when the people were rich, but when food and money were scarce, obedience to God became a test of faith. Malachi urged Israel to obey the law, for that was the prelude of blessing. God promised to honor their sacrifice by opening the windows of heaven. He was saying: "Put me to the test, and you will discover I honor my word." Wise and loyal Christians know it is impossible to outgive the Lord. He is no man's debtor. Some people may be impoverished because they are stingy. The Savior said:

Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together. and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again (Luke 6:38).

Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 1976), 552.

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