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## The Windows of Heaven

By Teresa Hampton

One of the fascinating things about the words of the prophets is what they reveal about God; his mind, character, love for the people, and expectations for them. One of the sad things about the prophet's work is what it reveals about his people.

The Israelites of Malachi's day did not keep many of God's ordinances. One, in particular, concerned giving. They were commanded to give of the first-fruits, the best of everything they possessed. The animals used in sacrifices were to be unblemished, whole, without defect. Instead of obeying this command, they offered animals that were stolen, lame, or sick (1:7-8). God said they *robbed* him in tithes and offerings (3:8).

The Lord, through Malachi, chastised the people and presented a challenge. He said, *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me now in this if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it* (3:10).

Having read the prophet's words, how do we Christians measure up in our giving? We have far more riches than those who lived before the cross. We have better promises, a better covenant, the perfect atonement for our sins, but do we give *more* than a tenth of our earnings to the Lord? Do we purpose our giving based on what we get after deductions or before, after expenses or before? Do we give God the leftovers or the best?

Malachi's message is powerful. God doesn't want us to return to him "a small portion" each Lord's day. He wants the first-fruits. When we give liberally from the top of our earnings, out of hearts filled with love, gratitude, and cheerfulness, God will open the windows of heaven and shower us with untold blessings!

**Today's Verse:** *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you* (Luke 6:38).

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