

## O LORD, OPEN HIS EYES

The King of Aram was at war with Israel. Each time he set an ambush, however, Elisha told the King of Israel where they were. The enraged enemy king assumed that one of his officers was a spy. When informed that Elisha was the problem, he sent a strong force at night to surround him. Elisha's servant got up early in the morning and was terrified to see that they were surrounded by the enemy. **“Don't be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha**”. (2 Kings 6:16, 17) The army of God was real, but could not be seen until the Lord opened the servant's eyes.

The ability to see is a treasure beyond value. It provides us with mobility and safety that blind people do not have. Civilized man has come to appreciate and depend upon devices that will help us see more clearly. Glasses, for example, enable many to drive a car who otherwise would not be qualified to do so. Nobody knows precisely who invented eyeglasses but they began to appear around A.D. 1,300. For the next three hundred years, however, eyeglasses were ignored by the scholars. From ancient times the philosophers had debated the subject of sight. The Greeks considered the eye as an active organ reaching out to see, rather than a passive instrument receiving images. Plato, Pythagorus, and Ptolemy all shared this concept. Democritus and the atomists, on the other hand, suggested that emissions from the seen object somehow entered the eye and produced images. Galen, the great arbiter of European anatomy, raised the “commonsense” objection that large objects, like a mountain, could not possibly squeeze themselves into the tiny pupil of an eye. In the mean while, eye glasses were available, but too often ignored.

The theologians were also skeptical of eyeglasses. They reasoned that God had given us eyes to see and that what our eyes saw was reality. What men saw through mirrors, prisms, and lenses was considered a visual lie and a distortion of reality.

After three hundred years of debate someone put a concave and a convex lense together and came up with a telescope. Unfortunately, this great scientific breakthrough was initially not well received. Galileo, for example, looked through a telescope and claimed to see four planets no one had ever seen before. “Prudent” people, however, were reluctant to allow the “firsthand” evidence of their eyes to be overruled by the trickery of some dubious and novel device. The eminent Aristotelian Cesare Cremonini refused to waste his time looking through Galileo's contraption for looking through those “spectacles” gave him a headache.

In March 1610 Galileo published a twenty-four page pamphlet, *The Starry Messenger*, that astonished and troubled the learned world by describing beautiful and delightful sights he had seen through the telescope. By 1633 the heretical observations of Galileo could no longer be overlooked by the church. Though he was seventy years of age and in failing health, he was summoned to Rome for trial by the Inquisition. He was too sick to walk and had to be carried there on a litter. It was Feb., 1633. After a long trial Galileo was forced to kneel before the Lord Cardinals Inquisitor-General and “renounce” his observations. It was Wednesday morning, June 22, 1633.

There are many lessons here with obvious spiritual implications. Just because something cannot be seen with the naked human eye does not mean that it does not exist and is not real. This is not only true of “reality” seen through telescopes and microscopes, it is also true of “reality” seen by means of faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). The army of God was real and present, but the servant of Elisha could not see it until the Lord opened his eyes.

Blindness to reality was not only a problem in the church when Galileo lived, it was also a problem in the first century, and it is still a problem today. Let us pray that God will also open our eyes that we may see (Rev. 3:18).