

An Open Heaven

by David Orton

<http://lifemessenger.org/an-open-heaven/>

You shall see heaven open,
and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man
John 1:50, 51

At particular turning points of history a window opens and heaven is poured out.

God localises his presence over the life of an individual, a church, a city, or nation in outpoured blessing and power, in what we often call revival. They are special moments of time when heaven touches earth.

Jesus taught that this is the one true object of prayer when he instructed us to ask, “*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*”. Which of us does not want this—to live under an open heaven, to revel in an unhindered experience of heaven on earth?

But what does this look like and how does it actually work? In this teaching we will first describe what an open heaven is, and secondly, prescribe how it may be experienced.

What is an “open heaven”?

An open heaven can be described as an unhindered manifestation in the earth of all that heaven is, of God’s own presence and glory. Natural laws can be temporarily or permanently suspended as heaven breaks in. Signs and wonders, miracles and healings, revelations and unusual manifestations of power can occur. To varying degrees poverty, sickness, disease, and human degradation are driven back by the overmastering love and power of God. The most unlikely are swept into the kingdom and this can often be accompanied by significant financial release for the work of God (Hag 2:8; Mtt 13:47; Acts 4:32-37).

Four characteristics

Generally these seasons are characterised by at least four things: revelation, visitation, habitation, and inundation.

Revelation

First, let us consider *revelation*. Jesus ‘read Nathaniel’s mail’. Seeing him, in the spirit, under the fig tree he revealed his inner nature as a man without guile. Despite being stunned by this amazing revelation Jesus promised him, “*You shall see greater things than that...you shall see **heaven open**, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man*” (Jn 1:50, 51).

Jesus is alluding to Jacob’s dream of Genesis 28. Falling asleep Jacob saw a ladder resting on the earth with its top reaching into heaven—in fact, a stairway to heaven. By this means the angels of God were ascending and descending. In Christ we now have an open heaven; he is the means by which heaven and earth communicate. Through him heaven comes to earth—ministering spirits are sent to men below, bearing the commands and comforts of our heavenly Father. And in turn they bear the prayers and praises of the saints back to heaven. In Christ a divine interchange is now possible between heaven and earth.

Angelic visitations, dreams, visions, and prophecies are all characteristics of an open heaven. An open and supernatural communication occurs. This is the “normal” Christian life. As Paul testified, “*I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows*” (2 Cor 12:2). For those who are *in Christ* supernatural encounters are to be expected. And when ‘appointed times’ (*kairos*) occur in the life of an individual, church, or even a nation they only increase in their intensity and incidence. We are in such a time.

Visitation

Secondly, let us consider *visitation*. An open heaven occurs during turning points of history to increase Christ's kingdom in the earth.

At the commencement of Jesus' public ministry he was baptised and as "*he went up out of the water... heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased'*" (Mtt 3:16, 17).

As the prototype Son this foreshadows a moment in history when the corporate Son, the church, reaches the fullness of Christ's stature—maturity (see Ephesians 4:11-13). The heavens will increasingly open over the corporate Christ in greater seasons of divine visitation and blessing as it approaches this time. Already, through increased manifestations of his glory, the Father is beginning to declare, "*Hey, this is my boy — this is my church, this is the corporate Christ, in whom I'm pleased!*"

Just as "*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, who then went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil*" (Acts 10:38) he will also anoint the corporate Christ with even greater effect; for he has promised, "*greater works shall you do because I go to the Father*" (Jn 14:12).

The heavens were also opened when Stephen was killed as the first martyr: "*Stephen full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see **heaven open** and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'*" (Acts 7:55, 56). At this the members of the Sanhedrin covered their ears screaming and rushed upon him, stoning him to death. Religious spirits will always resist an open heaven. But immediately the church was scattered from Jerusalem through the persecution and the word spread into Judea and Samaria. Through an open heaven the kingdom is always increased.

When it was time for the gospel to go out to the Gentiles the heavens were opened again. Peter, falling into a trance "*saw **heaven opened** and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners*" (see Acts 10:9-23). Through this open-heaven revelation, the door opened to the Gentiles. Peter was shown that he was not to declare unclean what God had declared clean. A whole new chapter of God's purpose for the earth began.

This generation has been called to live under an open heaven. Never before has the door to the Gentiles been as open as it is right now. This is the time to press into God for an open-heaven revelation and outpouring—for an increase of the supernatural so that the "*fullness of the Gentiles may come*" (Rom 11:25).

Habitation

Thirdly, we consider *habitation*. When Jacob awoke from seeing the heavens opened and angels ascending and descending his response was, "*WOW!*"

He exclaimed:

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

18 So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. 19 He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

Genesis 28:16–19 ESV

When God visits he comes to stay. He is not only interested in *visitation* but also *habitation*. He is looking for a place to dwell; somewhere he can call home, where he can kick back, and relax—an environment that answers to who he is. So, what creates that environment and what kind of house does he want to live in? one that's free of manipulation and merchandising (2 Pet 2:3, 14; 2 Cor 2:17); that is filled with worship and intercession. Jesus said that "*My Father's house shall be called a house of*

prayer for all nations” (Mk 11:17; Isa 56:7; Jn 2:16; 2 Cor 2:17; 2 Pet 2:3).

So, an open heaven is marked by a significant increase in the spirit of prayer and of worship. No church growth programme, city-reaching strategy, or ‘anointed’ entertainment will ever build the house that God lives in. He will only dwell with the humble and contrite of spirit. If we understood the implications of this we would be on our faces. Because we call ourselves ‘church’ does not guarantee that we are, in fact, the house of God! The Lord continues to cry out to this generation:

Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Isaiah 66:1–2 ESV

Inundation

Lastly, we consider *inundation*:

The Lord will **open the heavens**, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The Lord will make you the head and not the tail ...

Deuteronomy 28:12-13 NIV

When we are living under an open heaven not only is the Spirit outpoured but we can often also experience increased financial blessing. While not always the case, increased spiritual outpouring can signal increased financial outpouring. It is possible though to experience the one without the other. Why is this? Space doesn’t permit us to explore this in-depth, suffice to say that there are a number of reasons including: timing, spiritual warfare, the dealings of God, sowing and reaping, the trial of faith, purity of motive, and curses.

Even in view of these exceptional circumstances we are assured from Scripture that God desires to bless his children materially (see Ps 65:9-13; 68:10; Isa 60:5-9; Jer 31:12; Mtt 6:25-33; Rom 8:32; 2 Cor 8:9; Heb 13:5-6; 3 Jn 2). As his glory increases on the church this will be manifested by increased financial blessing for the sake of the gospel. The heavens belong to the Lord but the earth he has given to the sons of men (Ps 115:16). With the increase of the kingdom there will be an accompanying release of the earth’s resource for the work of God. In fact, under an open heaven there is a transfer of wealth as the abundance of the nations flows into the house of God. Where previously there has been financial struggle, suddenly with an open heaven, the floodgates of provision are opened and the kingdom moves forward.

Even so, we must sound a warning. This does not imply an increase of personal wealth, although obviously this can occur. What I am saying, is that under an open heaven “*no one will claim that any of their possessions are their own*” (see Acts 4:32). Neither am I implying a ‘community of goods’ or ‘common purse’, although some may be called to this. Nonetheless, under an open heaven there is such a fundamental inner change that material things have no hold. In obedience to the Spirit they can be released for the benefit of the gospel. We can therefore be trusted with substantial material increase.

Having described some of the characteristics of an open heaven, how do we experience one? There are several prerequisites.

Faith & patience

First, by *faith* and *patience*. The times and seasons belong to the Lord. There is sovereignty in the timing of God that is beyond our control. There are always divine delays in the fulfilment of the promise. Abraham was called to hold onto the promise for twenty-five years before it was finally realised:

And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through **faith** and **patience** inherit the promises.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.

Hebrews 6:11–15 ESV

Entering the full experience of an open heaven whether personally, as a ministry, or as the larger body of Christ is dependent on the Father’s own timetable; seasons of provision and destiny-realisation are determined by him. But in the meantime we press into God as we wait with faith and patience.

Resting in the work of Christ

Secondly, we experience an open heaven by resting in the work of Christ. Through his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension he “*has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand – with angels, authorities and powers being made subject to him*” (1 Pet 3:22).

He has already opened the heavens on our behalf:

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, **a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain**, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews 6:19–20 ESV

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) **he entered once for all into the holy places**, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”

Hebrews 9:11–12 ESV

“For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, **but into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”

Hebrews 9:24 ESV

Having lived his perfect life, satisfying the righteousness of God, Jesus cried out on the cross with his final breath, “*It is finished!*” The redemption of the world was finally accomplished—the work was complete. No amount of religious activity, or fleshly striving on our behalf can improve on what God in Christ has already perfected.

Obedying the Great Commandment

Third, an open heaven is experienced by obeying the *Great Commandment*. The promise of an open heaven is conditional: “*The Lord will open the heavens...if you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God...*” (Deut 28:12-13). But what are those commands? Jesus provided the answer when he was asked which was the greatest commandment. Quoting from the *shema* (Deuteronomy 6) he answered, “*Hear, O Israel, ... Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength*” (Mk 12:29).

Being under an open heaven, above all else, is a love relationship of covenantal fidelity. The good news is that Christ has

already lived this life in perfect obedience to the Father, fulfilling the righteousness of the law; and so, we now live unto God in the power of another life—Christ now lives his perfected humanity through us (Rom 5:10; 6:1-23; Heb 2:10; 5:9; 7:16). The Father is preparing a worshipping bride who at the climax of history will stand under an open heaven. She will enjoy unhindered communion and enter the full benefits of all that Christ has purchased.

We are in that climax of history. Now is the time, through faith and patience, to appropriate the promise of an open heaven. Let us therefore labour to enter Christ's rest (Heb 4:1-11), obeying the commandment to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength.

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