

An Open Heaven
Pastor Joe Oakley
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Have you ever heard the phrase: The heavens were like brass? Maybe you've heard Christians say, "When I pray, the heavens seem made of brass." What they mean by that is when they pray, it's like their prayers are hitting a ceiling of brass and bouncing back down. Their prayers are going nowhere and accomplishing nothing.

The expression "the heavens were brass" actually comes from the Bible. In Deuteronomy 28 God told His people of the blessings that would come from obeying Him and the curses that would come from disobeying Him. In verse 23 He says:

The heavens which are over your head shall be like brass, and the earth which is under you shall be like iron.

What God was telling them was that if they did not obey Him, He would not answer their prayers for rain. That's why this verse came to mean silence from God.

Most of us understand the frustration of unanswered prayer. Of feeling like our prayers are not getting anywhere.

There are several reasons the heavens may seem like brass. But, as we've seen in this sermon series called Open – maybe we aren't using the keys of the kingdom to open doors. Maybe our ears are not open to the voice of God.

But sometimes – they are open – but God stays silent until we draw closer to Him and press into Him with greater intensity. Maybe we've gotten to a place of complacency and stopped growing in Christ. Sometimes, that causes God to back off until we press in to Him. That's why James 4:8 says:

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Then at other times, there is a spiritual battle going on in the heavenlies that is delaying our prayers and making the heavens seem like brass. This happened to Daniel when an answer to his prayer was delayed. In Daniel 10:12-14, an angel said to Daniel:

Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.

But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the

king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future.

The kings and princes the angel mentioned are not earthly royalty. They are demonic principalities and powers who constantly fight to steal, kill, destroy and delay the answers to our prayers. But we have authority over them in Jesus' name.

But, as we saw in Deuteronomy 28:23 - the main reason the heavens become brass is because of our disobedience.

Today I'm preaching a message called An Open Heaven and we are going to take a look at what the Bible says about how to experience an open heaven.

I define an open heaven as an unhindered outpouring from God. That outpouring includes things like hearing God's voice, miracles, blessing, provision, healings, deliverance and salvation. An open heaven results in greater relationship with God, increased communication with God, and a deeper walk with God.

The first mention of an open heaven in the Bible is found in Genesis 7:11-12.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month — on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

Of course, this is the account of Noah and the flood that covered the earth. Normally, in the Bible, rain is a result of the blessing of God. In the case of the flood, it was the judgment of God. Of course, God has promised never to flood the entire earth again.

What I want you to see is that this first mention of open heavens in the Bible shows that open heavens speak of outpouring – whether that is rain or blessings or the Holy Spirit. In fact, I read Deuteronomy 28:23 where disobedience results in a closed heaven. But Deuteronomy 28:12 shows the blessing of obedience.

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.

We see here that obedience results in:

God opening the storehouse in the heavens

God sending showers of blessing

God blessing all your work to the extent that you become the lender, not the borrower!

I don't know about you, but I want that in my life!

Generally, an open heaven is characterized by four things: vision, provision, hearing, and outpouring. Let's look at those.

1- An open heaven results in vision from God

By vision I mean revelation from God. We see this all through the Bible. We see it in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 1:1

In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

In the New Testament, when Stephan was being martyred, he said in Acts 7:56

I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they 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 was increased.

All the way at the end of the Bible in Revelation, John saw visions of what would happen in the future. Revelation 19:11-13 says:

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns... He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God.

By the way, every single prophecy about Jesus coming to earth the first time came to pass down to the smallest detail. And every single prophecy about the second coming of Jesus Christ will come to pass!

He's coming back to judge the nations.

He's coming back to bring His children home.

He's coming back to wipe every tear from our eyes!

He's coming back to establish a new heaven and a new earth where we will rule and reign with Him!

One of the greatest visions that came from an open heaven was given to the Apostle Peter in Acts 10. Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, but they had a hard time leaving Jerusalem. They believed the gospel was only for Jews, not Gentiles. But Acts 10:1-2 says:

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

Because Cornelius had a heart after God and prayed to God regularly, God opened heaven and gave him a vision. Acts 10:3-5 says:

He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter."

Cornelius obeyed and sent his servants after Peter. While they were on their way, the Bible says Peter fell into a trance and had the same vision three times. Acts 10:11-13 says:

He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

Peter was shocked because he had never eaten anything unclean. God said don't call anything I have made unclean. God also told him to go with the men who would come looking for him.

The next day, Peter went to Caesarea where Cornelius lived. He saw a large crowd and told them about his vision. Then Cornelius told Peter about his vision from God. When Peter heard it, he preached the message of Jesus Christ to them and they became born again, spirit-filled believers.

What I want you to see is that when it was time for the Gentiles to receive the gospel, God opened the heavens and gave fresh vision. Not only does an open heaven result in vision from God, but -

2- An open heaven results in Provision

An open heaven means there is abundant blessing and provision. This literally happened to the Children of Israel when they had nothing to eat. Psalm 78:23-24 says:

He gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens; He rained down manna for the people to eat, He gave them the grain of heaven.

The point of this is that God can provide something out of nothing. At least, it looks like nothing to us. But God has abundant provision to meet our needs according to His riches in glory, or heaven. We just need to know how to open the doors to glory. Fortunately, God tells us in Malachi 3:10-11

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "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.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” says the Lord of hosts.

God says that tithing opens the windows of heaven so that He can release blessings TO us and rebuke the devourer FOR us.

Listen, I’m not saying if you tithe you will get rich and have no problems. And I know it takes faith to give God 10% of your income when money is tight. But remember the way The Phillips New Testament translates 2 Corinthians 9:13:

Your giving proves the reality of your faith.

Pastor Deb and I have been committed to tithing for years and we are committed no matter what. Whether we get a dime back in blessing or not – we tithe because God says tithe! We are committed to tithing in tough times.

We’ve tithed most of our marriage. Before I went into the ministry, I had a great job making great money. When I went into ministry, I was making half what I made before. Money got so tight that we quit tithing and things went from bad to worse. I know what it’s like to have your electricity cut off! I know what it’s like to have a car repossessed! I know what it’s like to have no money for Christmas presents. We’ve had all that happen to us.

But one day we made a commitment to tithe no matter what! And God turned our lives around! It wasn’t overnight, but it turned when we started tithing. That’s why I preach with confidence the word of God about tithing. It’s not just theory to me – I’ve seen the results in my life! I know I’m better off living on a blessed 90% than an unblessed 100% because I’ve done it both ways! That’s why tithers say they can’t afford NOT to tithe.

Many non-tithers think – I can’t afford to tithe. But the fact that you can’t afford it proves the truth of tithing. Because you are withholding God’s tithe, you are missing a blessing. Proverbs 11:24-25 says:

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

God’s principle is: give to Him first and you will receive. Sowing always precedes reaping. And there is always a time of waiting between sowing and reaping. Galatians 6:7-9 says:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ... Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Some say they'll tithe – but they quit if they don't see an immediate return. I believe many people give up before their harvest comes in and they forfeited their blessing.

God promises to open the windows of heaven to bless us, but He doesn't say what that blessing is or when it will come. 1 Corinthians says we can sow in the natural and reap in the spiritual.

Some blessings are financial; some are spiritual.

Some blessings are for today; some are for eternity.

Not all of God's blessings will be seen in this life! Some of it is stored up in heaven. Matthew 6:19-20 says:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

In other words, you can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.

But the point is – when you put God first in giving – blessings will be poured out on you. This does not necessarily mean that you will get wealthy.

In fact, God does not want you to hoard wealth for yourself.

He blesses you so that you can be a blessing to others.

He blesses you so that you can be a kingdom builder.

An open heaven results in vision and provision. Also –

3- An open heaven results in hearing God's voice

I won't say much about this because I just preached on hearing God. But, this is what happened to Jesus in Matthew 3:16-17-

As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, "You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased."

When Jesus was baptized – He was doing it out of obedience. John the Baptist even told Jesus that He didn't need to be baptized. But Jesus said in Matthew 3:15-

Let it be this way for now. We should do all things that are God's will.

Jesus made sure that He did everything that was God's will for Him. That's why He had an open heaven. That's why He heard the Father's voice. And it's the same for us!

Our obedience leads to an open heaven that gives us vision, provision and the ability to hear God. Lastly-

4- An open heaven results in an outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Throughout history, God has opened the windows of heaven to pour out His Spirit. This can happen to an individual, a church, a city or a nation. America has a great history of outpourings. And I'm believing for that to happen again!

By the way, did you know that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit? Luke 4:1 says that right after Jesus was baptized and the heavens opened:

Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan.

I want you to think about this: before Jesus was water baptized He did no miracles and preached no sermons. But after that, He began to do miracles and operate in the power of God. What happened? Did water baptism have that effect on Him? NO.

Jesus did not start operating in the supernatural until after He was filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was the Son of God – but when He came to earth He laid aside the independent exercise of power and relied upon the power of the Spirit.

After He was filled with the Holy Spirit – everything Jesus did was in the power of the Spirit. He taught in the power of the Spirit. He performed miracles in the power of the Spirit. He was led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus showed us how to live the Christian life in the power of the Spirit.

Trying to be Christlike – to live and love like Christ without the Holy Spirit is like:
 Trying to fly without wings
 Trying to breathe without air
 Trying to drive a car without gas.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an experience after salvation where a believer receives power from on high. Jesus is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit and He told the disciples they needed to wait until the Holy Spirit came upon them in power. Understand, they were already believers and had the Holy Spirit in them. But Acts 1:4-5 says

He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

And that happened on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled them with power just like He filled Jesus when He was baptized. Acts 2:1-4 says:

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Notice that heaven opened up and the wind of the Spirit and tongues of fire were released on the earth. And things on earth have never been the same!

And if you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, things in your life will never be the same!

An open heaven will give you fresh vision and revelation!

An open heaven will give you provision and protection!

An open heaven will open your ears to hear God!

And on open heaven will pour out the power of God on you!

When that happens, you will never be the same!

You will have power to witness!

You will have power over sin, self and Satan!

You will have anointing to operate in the gifts of the Spirit.

And you will have the power to live the Christian life to its fullest!