

Heaven Open (Quality: Good)

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- [0 : 00] As it may please the Lord to help us, I will direct your prayerful attention this evening to the first chapter in the Gospel according to John and the 51st verse.
- John chapter 1 verse 51. And he saith, that is the Lord Jesus Christ said unto Nathanael, Verily, verily, or surely, surely, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.
- Those of you who were here this morning will remember that I said it laid upon my spirit to bring before you today two examples of the Lord's wonderful work of conversion in the hearts of men and women.
- This morning we considered the life of Jacob, one who was brought up in a house, a home, where God was recognized.
- He had that great advantage over many. And we too, if we've been brought up in godly homes, have an advantage over many in our day and generation.
- [1 : 41] But as I said then, it is one thing to know about God. It's another thing to know God for ourselves.
- The scriptures are replete with examples of the Lord's sovereign work in the hearts of men and women.
- We sometimes perhaps look at a case like Jacob and see how wonderfully the Lord appeared for him and how he was brought to know and love the Lord.
- And perhaps we feel, well, my case is not like his. Therefore, is my case weak? Well, if you look at the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we have two cases there.
- Very different characters, very different ways the Lord led his people. First, we have the case of Lydia. We're told that Lydia was a Sala of purple, that she was on her own.
- [2 : 59] It would seem, and on the Sabbath day, she went to a place where prayer was wont to be made.
- And after that prayer meeting, it would seem that the Apostle Paul spake unto the women that resorted there. And there he began to communicate the things concerning Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners.
- And under the preaching of the gospel, a woman named Lydia, who gave attention unto these things, whose heart the Lord opened.
- And it seemed the very gentle work, in one sense, of the Holy Spirit, that opened that heart that she might receive the things of God.
- And the Lord used it effectively to her soul's conversion, that she followed the Lord Jesus Christ through the waters of baptism.
- [4 : 16] But also in the same chapter, we have the case of the Philippian jailer. A jailer was a hardened man.
- The very nature of his work required it. Some have thought that perhaps he was an ex-soldier now, in partial retirement, being given a position like this of authority.

And he had been given the charge of the apostles, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was an ex-soldier now, in the same way. And he had been given the charge of the apostles, and thrust them into the inner presence, and chained them, as it were.

All the preaching of the world would never change the heart of this man. He had no desire to hear anything concerning his own soul.

What was needed in his case? Well, the Lord knows exactly what each one of us needs to bring us to hearken to the things of God, to soften these hearts of stone, to make us tender in the fear of God.

[5 : 45] And with the Philippian jailer, it needed an earthquake. This awakened the man to his felt sense of need as a poor, wretched, how deserving sinner.

And he came in to the apostles and fell down and cried out, what must I do to be saved? Well, if we read the account of Wright, the jailer took the two disciples, washed their wounds, and then he and his household, which would probably mean his servants, listened to Paul preaching.

And it was under the preaching of the gospel that this man was converted unto the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's a beautiful thought that Lydia and the Philippian jailer were to be found in the same church in communion one with another.

we find in this chapter that we have read together this evening the way of the Lord calling his disciples.

And all these things are examples unto us of how the Lord sovereignly works in the lives of different people at different times, under different circumstances.

[7 : 25] there he calls two disciples, Andrew and another disciple believed to be John.

these were touched by John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus. And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, behold, the Lamb of God.

And this made a deep impression upon these two disciples, so much so that they followed the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, Andrew calls his brother Peter to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Peter is to be a great disciple. and he brought him to Jesus.

And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonah. Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.

[8 : 46] And so, Andrew was made instrumental in bringing Peter to the Lord Jesus Christ. And then the day following, the Lord findeth Philip and saith unto him, follow me.

And it would seem in Philip's case that there were no outward means used. The Lord called him directly unto himself. And then we read that Philip findeth Nathaniel.

Philip findeth Nathaniel. How vastly different is the case of Nathaniel to that of Jacob.

It would seem that with Nathaniel the work of grace had already begun in his heart. And Philip says unto him, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

What a wonderful statement to make. You know, so often I believe it is when a person is called by grace and another is laid upon their spirit and in their zeal to bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ, to speak to them of his wonderful works and what he has done for them, how he has called them by his grace and quicken them by his spirit and given them the gift of everlasting life.

[10 : 44] These things cannot be hidden. They are to speak. You know, they used to speak of gossiping the gospel. Well, I think we are today too reticent in these matters.

We should speak freely what glorious hope we have. The Lord Jesus Christ has put in our hearts that good hope by grace that we shall be saved at last brought into his kingdom and glory there to be forever with the Lord.

We have found him. Have we found the Lord Jesus Christ? Has he been made known unto us?

God I believe I believe if he has, then we will want to tell others, our loved ones, our nearest and dearest, our children, our relations, our friends.

Then will I tell to sinners round what a dear saviour I have found. God. We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophet did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

[12 : 17] See how clear his statement is. See how faithful this man is.

Without any doubts, I know in whom I have believed. Do we know in whom we have believed?

Do we not so often have to say, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief? Do we not harbour at times many doubts and fears?

But here it's a clear statement of faith. This man believed in his whole heart that Christ is the son of God.

But what was the reaction of Nathaniel? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

[13 : 21] God shows his ignorance. But I don't believe that Nathaniel was like some of the Pharisees who questioned the veracity of the Lord Jesus Christ, who were stubbornly ignorant of the things of God.

I believe Nathaniel couldn't understand as he could find no reference in the scriptures to the Messiah coming out of Nazareth.

I believe it was a genuine inquiry. You know, perhaps I could speak to you young people. Perhaps there are things you don't understand.

Perhaps you need to inquire about things. Don't be frightened to ask. You may think your question is so simple that you will be spurned, but you know, your pastor, your deacons and members, perhaps your parents, perhaps can help you.

Don't harbor these things. seek an answer because if your question is real in your mind, then there will be an answer to it.

[14 : 58] That answer will be satisfactory to you from the word of God. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? It would seem an impossibility.

answer to that Philip gave. He didn't cry and teach him doctrine. He didn't even go to the scriptures and say, now look, these things are written here.

He didn't try and explain the meaning that Christ came from Nazareth. He made a simple and yet a profound statement.

Come and see. And if you come and see, then you will believe. sometimes we need that simple faith to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow.

come and see. What better answer could he give than to direct him to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[16 : 32] And remember that we have one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

Our ministers are not called priests. Priests are no longer needed in the church. We are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is our office to speak well of him, to exalt a precious saviour, to point sinners to the one and only saviour.

A saviour for sinners the gospel makes known. It is found in the merits of Jesus alone. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and saith of him, behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.

we need to examine scripture at times minutely. Every single word has a meaning.

[18 : 01] We have here a behold. And if you might remember that in our text this morning, there were two beholds.

what is the word behold? Well, I've likened it thus to a signpost. A signpost that gives direction.

Direction to some important way, or in this instant, to some important truth. And I believe you'll find, after every behold, there is some vital statement that is set before us.

Behold, an Israelite, not a Jacobite. You remember with Jacob, there came a time when the Lord said, my name shall no longer be called Jacob, the supplanter, but Israel shall thy name be.

And if you look through the scriptures, you will find this throughout the whole word of God. There are times when it speaks of Jacob, there are other times when it speaks of Israel.

[19 : 22] And I believe we can see it in this light, that Jacob is the old man of sin, Israel is the new man of God. And so where we have a reference to Israel, it speaks of a new creation.

Behold an Israelite. Here is one that is a converted soul. Here is one that is a child of God. Here is one that has been called by grace, an Israelite.

Indeed, truly so. God is a God. Now, we're not told much about Nathaniel. It would perhaps be that he had never committed any gross sin, but we know, of course, that all are under sin.

We're born in sin and shaped in iniquity. In sin did our parents conceive us. the whole creation, from Adam's day to this, have been born as sinners.

And so Nathaniel was a sinful man. But look at the statement of the Lord Jesus. Wonderful, wonderful statement that is spoken here of this man, in whom there is no guile.

[21 : 02] In whom there is no guile. And I believe that means this, that his sins, which were many, are all forgiven him.

That Christ has made an end of sin for him and clothed him in his own perfect righteousness.

And I say again, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

Nathaniel answers, whence knowest thou me? He'd never seen the Lord Jesus Christ before. He did not know him in that night.

And the Lord Jesus Christ answers, before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

[22 : 06] And again, it shows the perfect nature of the God-man Christ Jesus. Knows the thoughts and the intents of every heart.

knowest what Nathaniel was meditating upon, what his thoughts were directed to, what his desires were, what the whole thrust of his life added up to.

The Lord knows us all together exactly as we are. we cannot hide from God. As a hymn writer says, I cannot take a single breath except thou give me power.

God, we are his creation. The Lord created man upon the face of this earth.

And do you not think that the Lord knows his creation? He knows the end from the beginning. He knows everything. He knows us in our unregeneracy.

[23 : 27] He knows the appointed time when his people shall be called unto himself. He knows the beginning. He knows the end of their days. He knows all that they must pass through in this waste howling wilderness here below.

The Lord knows us. What a mercy. He saw me ruined in the fall, yet loved me not withstanding all.

He saw me in my lost estate, his loving kindness. Oh, how great! What was the reaction of the family?

Perhaps among the greatest statements to be found in the whole word of God. God. And he said unto him, Rabbi, that is master, thou art the son of God, thou art the king of Israel.

And you'll remember that Peter made a similar statement to this. who do men say that I am, thou art the Christ, the son of the blessed.

[25 : 01] What think ye of Christ is the test to try both your state and your scheme. He cannot be right in the rest unless he think rightly of him.

Thou art the son of God, thou art the king of Israel. Nathaniel had just met the Lord Jesus Christ.

How did he know this concerning him? Well, it didn't come from nature's ground. It didn't come out of his own fallen heart. led of the Holy Spirit, taught of God.

These things are a revelation from the Most High to bring us to know him, the eternal Son of God, the second person in the blessed Trinity.

Thou art God. It is a statement that is definite, a statement that has no uncertainty in it. Thou art the Son of God.

[26 : 19] Thou art the King of Israel. Thou art the rightful King who sits upon no precarious throne nor borrows leave to be.

And if Christ is a King, then he has a kingdom. kingdom. And as he instructed his disciples, my kingdom is not of this world. He is a King of heaven.

He sits upon the throne of God. All power is given unto him both in heaven and in earth. And in that power he shall come again to deliver up his people unto himself and to destroy the wicked from off the face of the earth.

Now to whom do we owe allegiance? Man thinks that he is a free agent. But of course he is ignorant of the very fact that he is under a master.

Man by nature is under the devil. The devil leads man whithersoever he would have him to go. Man is subject unto the wickedness of that evil one.

[27 : 48] until the Lord Jesus Christ sets him free and at liberty and still a stronger than he comes and binds the strong man.

And then we become the servants of Christ. We obey our master. who's your master?

Who's my master? Who are we serving? Are we serving the lusts of our flesh? Are we living in the pride of our life?

Are we following the dictates of this world? or are we simply following the Lord Jesus Christ? The way, the truth, and the life?

Simple question in one sense, but very profound because the answer dictates as to where we stand at this given time.

[29 : 01] if we remain the servants of Satan, then we shall be destroyed at last. There are two places to which every one of us is bound.

It's either to heaven and eternal glory, or to howl and eternal misery. Where are we destined for?

do we have any good hope through grace that we shall not be cast out of God's presence forever and ever? Do we have a good hope through grace that we shall be found in heaven at last?

Singing the song of the redeemed around the throne of God, worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ through an ever-ending eternity, blessed portion to those that are truly his people.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou, thou shalt see greater things than these.

[30 : 23] thee, I say unto thee, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

man. Those of you who were here this morning will remember that these words were taken from the account of Jacob's ladder, the dream that he had for the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

But notice this here. Nathanael said, Thou art the Son of God. Christ said that he is the Son of Man.

And again, it's a wonderful truth. If only we can receive it. That Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who was in the bosom of the Father from the beginning of time, who left the heavens, veiled his glory, and took upon himself the nature of man.

And why did he do this? That he might pay the price of their sin. that he might deliver them from the wrath that is to come.

[32 : 14] That he might reconcile them unto the Father. And I believe we mentioned this morning this statement, which may on the surface seem strange to us.

We would expect, perhaps, to consider that the angels were descending and then ascending.

But no, the Lord Jesus Christ here confirms what is said in Genesis, that the angels of God were ascending and then descending upon the Son of Man.

What does it mean? It means this, that the Lord Jesus Christ, having paid the price of the sin of his covenant people, that tremendous load that was laid upon him, we see his sufferings in Gethsemane's garden, when he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.

And then in the judgment hall, as his back was rent by the soldiers, the crown of thorns laid upon his head.

[33 : 51] And then his journey to Golgotha, to the place of the scar, where they nailed him to the accursed tree, and hung him up there.

Of his sufferings so intense, angels have not perfect sin. And how can we fully enter into these things, that all that we might be led a little into the mystery of his sufferings.

The soldiers pierced his side, his true, but we have pierced him through and through. He died for sinners.

he died to set the captive free. He died that they might live and live that they might have life more abundantly.

He died unto sin. He paid that ultimate price. And on the third day, according to the scriptures, as we sometimes sing, vain the stone, the rock, the sea, Christ had burst the gates of hell.

[35 : 27] What a mercy there that the scriptures were fulfilled, that the Son of Man rose triumphant from the dead, and after a brief period, ascended up into glory.

The angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of God. The message of salvation then, for God's people, relayed unto heaven itself, unto the throne of God, unto the Father that sits upon that throne, that Christ had remitted all that was due unto the law.

Remember, the apostle tells us that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Are we brought to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Is our hope found in his death? Can we see the glory of our Emmanuel, who rose triumphant, having defeated sin and death and hell, justifying his people?

We mentioned, I believe, in prayer. There's opening verses of Romans 8. There is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus.

[37 : 09] hereafter, ye shall see the heaven open. I believe we might interpret that henceforth, from now on, ye shall see the heaven open.

To the unbeliever, the heavens are sharp. Their prayers cannot enter in. for we read that God is angry with the wicked every day, that his judgment is toward them.

They have no peace with God. for when the person is called by grace, justified through the sovereign finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are made one with God.

And their prayers are offered up through him alone. and it is that conveyance into heaven itself, those prayers which are acceptable unto God.

Because he says of his son, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. God was satisfied with the work that the son had performed.

[38 : 41] As the son could say in the volume of the book, it is written of me, I come to do thy will, O my God, thy law is within my heart.

That which we could not do, Christ did for us if we are his people. And it is this ministry of reconciliation that the apostle preached and all God's servants are commissioned to preach.

Be ye reconciled unto God. What a mercy to have heaven open. Notice again the exactness of the language.

God's church. It doesn't say heaven opened or heaven will open or heaven is opening. No, it says here after all.

Hence for heaven is open. we have access to God's through God's only beloved son, through the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, through our great mediator, through him who has made atonement for us.

[40 : 04] we are no longer under the condemnation of God. We are at peace with God.

Peace, perfect peace. In this dark world of sin, the blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, here is a statement of assurance to every true child of God that heaven is accessible, that God will not deny the prayers of his people.

Poor, stumbling, foolish souls that we are, how we feel the poverty of our prayers, how we feel ourselves so often wretched and undone, but loved with an everlasting love, we love him in return.

And it is this love to the Lord Jesus Christ where we come unto him, our great high priest, who now lives upon the throne of God.

[41 : 27] And well is a statement of John the Baptist, behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. John on the Isle of Patmos, in his vision, saw a lamb in the midst of the throne as it had been slain.

A lamb perhaps is, of all creatures, the weakest and meekest, and a lamb slain surely is a picture of great weakness.

But here this lamb is in the midst of the throne. This lamb is triumphant. This lamb is all glorious.

What have you view by faith? to see Christ, to see him who is our Lord, our God, and our all.

King of kings, Lord of lords, the sovereign ruler over heaven and over earth. are we subject unto him?

[42 : 48] Have we that living faith that is evidenced in the life here of Nathaniel and in the life of many of the characters that are given unto us in scripture?

We mentioned the conversion of the apostle Paul how the Lord appeared unto him and called him directly.

We see the tremendous change, a complete, a perfect change in the life of this man. Once a hater of the things of God, now a lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered many things for Christ and for the gospel's sake.

And then we have the case of Timothy. Often thought upon this, Timothy was instructed by his grandmother and his mother.

We don't read of any dramatic conversion, but he was a converted man. The scriptures were made known unto him.

[44 : 09] The spirit laid them upon his spirit. He became a child of God. Ah, then, poor sinner, what is your case tonight?

What are your doubts and fears? Are you saying, I don't have the case that some of these had?

people, my case seems to be so poor. I seem to know so little of the things of God. Take courage, soul.

What is the desire of your heart? I mentioned this morning that there is a heretofore, there is a previous state, present time when the Lord meets with his people, and then there is a hereafter.

And it is in seeing that hereafter. Now, what is the thrust of your life? Is it to glorify God in your body?

[45 : 23] Is it to speak well of him? Is it to follow according to his holy will? Can you honestly bow before God and say thy will be done by me on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven?

This is my desire. Are you made willing to forsake all that you might follow him? To give up everything for Christ and for the gospel's sake?

Think of those early disciples. disciples. They sold all that they had. The things of this world meant nothing to them.

The apostle says in one place that I might wing Christ and be found in him. Is this your desire tonight?

That you might wing Christ and be found in him? that you might walk in newness of life? That you might be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ?

[46 : 34] That you might be an example unto others to show how Christians ought to live? Well, we've seen two different cases, but we've seen one glorious end, to know the perfect work of God begun in our hearts.

Let me remind you again that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it. That is, that work will continue because it's God's work.

It's Christ's work in you. Christ in you, the hope of glory, that work must and will continue because his honour is at stake.

And so, to serve him all our days, may this be our great desire, or to be separated from all things party could I be, but never, never, Lord, from thee.

And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

[48 : 06] Look to the great mediator, the one who paid the price and gave deliverance unto his people, and his great delight and his great desire is to have his church complete with him in glory, and to rejoice, and for they to rejoice in him through a never-ending eternity.

May the Lord be pleased to add his blessing for his own name's sake, amen. Amen.