

THE OPENING OF HEAVEN

“ Jesus said, ‘You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.’ He then added, ‘I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’” (John 1:50-51)

Jesus, as you know, had a supernatural insight into man. **“ Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.” (John 2:24-25).** Therefore, when Jesus saw Nathanael under a fig tree, He apparently understood precisely what he was thinking. That's why, when they first met, Jesus recognized him as a **“true Israelite, in whom there was nothing false” (Jn. 1:47).** Nathanael wanted to know how Jesus knew him. Jesus explained that He saw him while he was still sitting under a fig tree before Philip called him. There was apparently something supernatural about this, for immediately Nathanael identified Jesus as the “Son of God” and “King of Israel” (Jn. 1:49).

That's when Jesus promised Nathanael that he would see “greater things” than that. Jesus promised Nathanael that he would see heaven open and angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. This terminology would be reminiscent of the promises God made to Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28:10 - 15). Against all human wisdom, God would bless Jacob. Against all human wisdom, God would bless Jesus!

Supernatural insight does make a difference. When Elisha saw Elijah go up to heaven in a whirlwind it was a harbinger of spiritual power (2 Ki. 2:7 - 12),. Later, when Elisha's servant saw the army of the king of Aram, he was totally discouraged. When his eyes were opened to spiritual reality, however, he **“looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Ki. 6:17).** When Stephen was about to die he said: **“I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:56)**

The early church considered itself to be surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1). Since they often met in secret, and since their congregations were often small, this “great cloud of witnesses” was obviously spiritual. Later in the chapter we learn that it involved “thousands upon thousands of angels” and the “spirits of righteous men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22 - 24).

The Bible gives many examples of the heavens being opened. Enoch walked with God and was translated into heaven without dying (Gen. 5:18- 24). Balaam's ass spoke with a human voice and then Balaam saw an angel (Nu. 22:21 - 35). The Israelites could open the windows of heaven by paying their tithes (Mal. 3:8 - 12) God spoke from heaven when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:16, 17). God spoke again from heaven when Jesus was transfigured (Matt. 17:5). God spoke again from heaven when Jesus faced the cross (John 12:28 - 33). Jesus appeared to Saul from heaven on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1 - 16). Peter had heavenly visions on the rooftop (Act 10:9 - 23). Paul's had a heavenly vision and was caught up to paradise (2 Cor. 12:1 - 10). . John saw an open door in heaven and heard a voice inviting him “come up here” (Rev. 4:1).

One major way the early church made contact with the spirit world was by breaking bread. It is not an accident that this meal is called “communion”. It was, as you know, the principle reason why the early church met (Acts 20:7). In some mysterious way, taking the cup was a communion with the blood of Christ. In the same way breaking the bread was a communion with the Body of Christ” (1 Cor. 10:16). Since there is only “one body”, this “communion” not only involves God, Jesus, and angels, but also the “spirits of righteous men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22 - 24). It also includes all presently alive who have been baptized into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). We are not to have communion with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14), but we are to have communion with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). When you face a crisis in your life, don't be surprised if God opens the heavens for you!