

OPEN HEAVEN

Part 2 • June 30, 2024 • Pastor Jason Smotherman

One of the greatest mysteries in this life: why would God desire a friendship with man, his creation: Not just friendship, but partnership to bring an Open Heaven to the world.

Open Heaven:

Direct connection to God through Jesus being displayed in tangible life-giving ways to the world around us.

The signs are everywhere throughout scripture.

God, throughout time, desires to impart and direct new seasons through men and women that are connected to his heart.

Noah, Jonah, Moses, Esther, Elijah, Elisha, Peter.

Ezekiel even notes, that I looked for a man among them...and I found no one.

What we learn through scripture:

He is actively, intentionally, looking for men and women to partner with to declare and display Open Heaven to the world. When these men and women come together, the church is birthed in purpose.

We are at a crossroads in our country. The crossroads of being a Stephen vs. Lot's wife.

Stephen knew that speaking loudly would probably cause his death, but not speaking would cause the spiritual deaths of untold thousands.

Stephen had the heart of a father.

Fathers care and are concerned about the future of the people around them.

Sons are concerned with their own future.

We need fathers today, not sons.

This has nothing to do with age, rather maturity.

Lot's wife has the heart of a daughter, not a mother.

Genesis 19 tells the incredible story of a woman who would rather stay silent and survive than use her voice so that her daughters would live. The pinnacle of the story is seen when the town is beating on their doorstep, wanting to assault angels and Lot offers his daughters instead.

Why would Jesus in Luke 17:32, encourage us to remember Lot's wife. She is recorded as saying nothing, doing nothing, she was turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back at her life of nothing. **That's the point, God gave her a voice and she used it not.**

The church has largely remained silent in what is arguably the most divisive time in recent history in our country. We have turned away from God and his statutes and judgment is coming. It is in these pivotal moments that God searches to find a people who are willing to be Stephens rather than Lot's wife.

Speak up and you will get canceled.

Stay silent and you will get cornered and run out of town with regret.

The Spirit of Joshua needs to re-emerge in these last days.

JOSHUA 24:15 NKJV

As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.

What is needed today, are forerunners. God chasers.

The very inference of forerunning is not walking, not hiding in the pack, but willing to stand up and stand out.

ROMANS 10:14-17 NKJV

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,

Who bring glad tidings of good things!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" ¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Newsflash: You are to be the proclaimer or preacher in your world.

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5 NKJV

¹ I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Stephen stood and invited his generation to the God of the Open Heaven.

The things you've witnessed now can be experienced.

Patterns and traditions are roadblocks to understanding Open heaven.

You must understand that our God is a God of the Altar.

When God's people experienced a victory, He would direct them to build an altar.

These altars were markers of significant moments in God.

These altars did two things for the people of God.

- They created a visible testimony of the power of God at work in the lives of the people.
- They created the ability to move on to the next thing He was about to do.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14 NKJV

... forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are ahead ...

He wants us to lift up our spiritual eyes and begin to reach....

Just as these religious leaders get stuck in tradition, so does the modern-day Christian.

We are called to REACH.

Stephen demonstrated what spiritual reach should be founded upon.

- It should be rooted in scripture (He gave a masterclass on movement)
- It should be honoring of yesterday's movement by declaring the movement of TODAY. (Yesterday's victories should give us the courage to fight today's battles)
- Unique to today.

Very directly, God is asking:

- To become Fathers and Mothers of the faith rather than staying sons and daughters.
- Use our voice to provide the hope of the gospel
- Shake off the traditions that have us stuck, and REACH