

OPEN HEAVEN

Part 6 • August 4, 2024 • Pastor Jason Smotherman

ACTS 7:49 (KJV)

Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? Saith the Lord; or what is the place of My rest?

A direct question, from scripture, what house will you build for Me? A call to responsibility. What house will YOU build for Me? How is this house built? Stephen borrows an incredible passage of scripture from Isaiah to open a new season of decision to the church. No longer will the priests be mediators, we now have Jesus, and because of this direct connection: we are provided a clear question. What house will you build?

ISAIAH 66:1-2 (NKJV)

Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word."

Three terms describe the kind of people that God looks for so that He might have a relationship with His people.

HUMBLE

The first trait is that they are "humble" and dependent on God.

DL Moody spoke of one of his mentors, Dr. Bonar, who once said that he could tell when a Christian was growing. In proportion to his growth in grace he would elevate his Master, talk less of what he himself was doing, and become smaller and smaller in his own esteem, until, like the morning star, he faded away before the rising sun.

FB Meyer: I used to think, that God's gifts were on shelves one above another and the taller we grow, the easier we can reach them. Now I find, that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath another and the lower we stoop, the more we get.

True humility is not to think low of oneself but to think rightly, truthfully of oneself.

Elevation of one's self is demotion of God.

The best self care, according to scripture:

JOHN 3:30 (NKJV)

He must increase and I must decrease

One of the greatest obstacles to a relationship with God is the haughtiness and selfishness of a person. Humility recognizes He is God, and I am not.

CONTRITE SPIRIT

The second term describes a person with a "contrite spirit," a term that does not refer to being despondent but lowly and dependent on divine help (57:15).

REVELATION 2:5 (KJV)

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent

Drifting is a concern in modern day Christianity.

We must return to the contrite spirit.

It's the vehicle that takes us to transformation.

Rick Renner: In this modern age, people want to be comforted and told that everything is going to be all right. But the truth is, some things are not going to be all right in people's lives unless they make a decision to repent and change.

True repentance requires an acknowledgment of absolute truth.

Psalm 51 provides a vivid example of genuine repentance and is, in fact, called David's psalm of repentance. In this psalm, one can sense not only David's sorrow but also his decision to change. In verse 17, he wrote about a heart that is broken over sin:

PSALM 51:17 (KJV)

*"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart,
O God, thou wilt not despise."*

The word "contrite" is the Old Testament expression for someone who is genuinely repentant for what he has done. This is a person who has recognized his wrong, decided to change, and now desires to live uprightly.

A Sunday school teacher once asked a class what was meant by the word "repentance." A little boy put up his hand and said, "It is being sorry for your sins." A little girl also raised her hand and said, "Please, it is being sorry enough to quit."

TREMBLE

The third characteristic of the people God wants to have a relationship with is that they "tremble" at God's word (cf. Ezra 9:4; 10:3).

Prairie Overcomer (50's Christian Newsletter): There are four great impelling motives that move men to action: Fear, Hope, Faith, and Love—these four, but the greatest of these is Fear. Fear is first in order, first in force, first in fruit. Indeed, fear is "the beginning of wisdom." Scripture summarizes the chief cause of sin and crime: "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

People like this stand in awe before the King of Kings who made the heavens and the earth. They deeply respect what God has said, take it very seriously, internalize it and make it part of their worldview, and then they implement it in their daily walk and thinking.

Howard S. Bacon: It was Easter Sunday morning in 1907, my third Easter in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church. I stood before my congregation in Venice Center, N.Y., to read the Scripture lesson, as found in Matthew 28. When I came to verse 4, instead of the inspired words, "And for fear of Him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men," I heard myself say, "And for fear of Him the shakers did quake." Appalled, I quickly proceeded to correct my mistake by solemnly declaring, "For fear of Him the Quakers did shake and became as dead man."

MATTHEW 10:39 (NIV)

Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for My sake will find it

The goal of our lives should be to see what Stephen saw.

An audience of ONE.

Throughout scripture we see Jesus sitting at the right hand of his father. Stephen saw Jesus standing.

ACTS 7:55 (KJV)

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

We declare that we see Jesus standing in our world, in our nation, in our state, in our families, and in our church. We are not satisfied until He takes His rightful place. We humble ourselves with a contrite spirit, and tremble at His words.

