

The Church – An Open Heaven on Earth

Dr. John Carmichael

[Gen 28:17-22 NASB95] 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." 18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. 19 He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, 21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. 22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

- Jacob had a dream in the wilderness. He laid his head on a stone, and God opened heaven to him. He saw a ladder with angels ascending and descending, pointing us to Christ Himself as the bridge between heaven and earth ([Jhn 1:51 NASB95] 51 And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."). When Jacob awoke, he declared, "Surely the Lord is in this place!" and named it Bethel, the house of God.
- The church, the house of God (Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:15), is described as the gate of heaven. [Gen 28:17 NASB95] 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."
- For us, Bethel represents the church, which is meant to be more than a building. It is the house of prayer where heaven touches earth. In this passage, Jacob's actions: setting up the stone, pouring oil on it, and making a vow; teach us vital truths about God's house.

What creates an open heaven in the church?

Here are four things that creates an open heaven in the church.

I. The Rock: Hearing and Obeying the Words of Christ

- a. [Gen 28:18 NASB95] 18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.
- b. Jesus said, [Mat 16:18 NASB95] 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.
- c. The true rock is Christ and His words ([Mat 7:24-25 NASB95] 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and [yet] it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.).
- d. Even to this day, every monarch of the United Kingdom is crowned upon a stone. It is believed by some to be Jacob's very stone from Bethel. Whether or not that's historically true, the message is powerful: no throne stands secure without God's foundation. And if kings of this world need a stone, how much more do we need Christ, the Rock of Ages, as the foundation of our lives! The Stone of Destiny is returned for every coronation. **The Stone of Destiny - Jesus Christ – is our Stone of Destiny.**
- e. The church as Bethel is built on hearing and obeying the Word of Christ. We must not just hear sermons but put them into practice.
- f. Commit to regular Bible reading and obedience. Ask yourself each week: What is one command of Christ I will act on?

II. The Oil: The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

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- a. [Gen 28:18 NASB95] 18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.
- b. Oil in Scripture symbolizes the Holy Spirit
 - i. [1Sa 16:13 NASB95] 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.
 - ii. [Act 10:38 NASB95] 38 "[You know of] Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and [how] He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.
 - iii. Jesus Himself was anointed with the Spirit, and so must His church be.
- c. The church cannot be merely human effort. It must be anointed by the Spirit. Prayer meetings, worship, and preaching must be saturated with the presence of the Spirit.
- d. Seek the baptism and continual filling of the Holy Spirit ([Eph 5:18 NASB95] 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,).
- e. Make space for the Spirit in every gathering.

III. The Place: The House of Prayer

- a. [Gen 28:19 NASB95] 19 He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz.
- b. [Mar 11:17 NASB95] 17 And He [began] to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN."
- c. [Act 16:13 NASB95] 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.
- d. The church is not primarily a social club, entertainment hall, or lecture series. It is the house of God where prayer brings heaven's activity to earth.
- e. Prioritize corporate prayer. Set aside time in services, families, and personal life to make prayer central.

IV. The Vow: The Tithe Belongs to the House of God

- a. [Gen 28:22 NASB95] 22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."
- b. [Mal 3:10 NASB95] 10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows.
- c. "If, then, God shall fulfill these promises, he binds his posterity to build God a house, and to devote for the maintenance of his worship the tenth of all their earthly goods. As this mode of supporting the ministers of God (who give up their whole time, talents, and strength, to watch over, labour for, and instruct the people in spiritual things, justice requires that they shall receive their support from the work) was instituted by himself, so we may rest assured it was rational and just." Adam Clark
- d. Tithing is a declaration that God is our source. The tithe belongs in the church, God's house, to fund ministry, mission, and prayer.
- e. Faithfully return the tithe to God. See it as part of worship, not just duty.

- **The church is the house of prayer where Christ is our foundation, the Spirit anoints us, and our faith is expressed in worship, obedience, and giving.**
- **Jacob's experience at Bethel shows us what the church should be: built on Christ the Rock, anointed by the Spirit, devoted to prayer, and supported by faithful tithes. In this house, heaven touches earth, and lives are transformed.**