

WHO IS JESUS?

JOHN 1:45-51

JESUS IS OUR LADDER



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DAVID MURRAY
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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt heaven was shut to you? Perhaps you were praying for something but sensed your prayers were just bouncing off heaven's walls. "How do I get through to God?" you cry.

Or maybe you've been living apart from God or even against God and you've been thinking of turning or returning to God, but when you begin look up, all you see is high walls, closed doors, and no entry signs. **How can I get access to God?**

In John 1:46-51 Jesus provides a ladder to access God. This ladder gets us over every obstacle and all the way through to God.

BACKGROUND

- Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1-2)
- Jesus is our Creator (1:3)
- Jesus is our Light and Life (1:4-9)
- Jesus is our Big Brother (1:10-13)
- Jesus is our Tabernacle (1:14-17).
- Jesus is our Preacher (1:18)
- Jesus is the Messiah (1:19-28)
- Jesus is our Sacrifice (1:29)
- Jesus is our Rabbi (1:35-46)
- Jesus is our Ladder (1:46-51)



Why is heaven closed?
Because your heart is closed.



1. JESUS IS A HEART-OPENER (46-49)

Although we think the problem is a closed heaven, the real problem is often a closed heart. That's why Jesus opens Nathanael's heart before he opens heaven to Nathanael.

Sin shuts hearts

During the summer holidays, seven-year-old Julian was digging around in his back yard, when he came across a large stone with some squiggles on it. As he brushed off the mud, a small fossil shape emerged. Unable to carry the heavy boulder, he ran to his buddy Aaron next door excitedly told him all about his discovery, and asked him for help with moving it. "Whatever!" his friend replied without looking up from his Nintendo Switch. "No, no, Aaron, you've got to come and see this. It's amazing. If only you could see it, you'd want to help me."

Something like this happened to Philip when he found Jesus. He ran to his friend Nathanael and excitedly told him: "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (45). Barely looking up, **Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"** (46). Nathanael's suspicious heart was closed to this good news, untouched by Philip's excitement and extraordinary claims." "Whatever!" he basically and cynically responded. **Philip said to him, "Come and see" (46).** Philip realized that seeing Jesus would do far more than his speaking of Jesus. "Come and see for yourself. You won't be disappointed."

Jesus opens hearts

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit (bait)!" (47). Notice, he doesn't say, "Can any good thing come out of Cana?" Jesus reacts positively not negatively, and highlights the good rather than the bad. "Unlike your deceitful ancestor Jacob, you are honest, straight, and true. Jesus saw into Nathanael's heart and saw truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6). WYSIWYG.

"How do you know me?" Nathanael scoffed (48). **Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you"** (48). Suddenly Nathanael's rusty heart doors swing open. **"Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"** (49). Whatever happened under the fig tree, Nathanael knew that only he knew about it. From what Jesus says next, I believe Nathanael was meditating on and praying over Genesis 28:10-22 (esp. verses 12-13).

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Come and see Jesus. Perhaps you've grown cynical and negative over the years. Disappointments in God, his church, his people, and providence, have locked your heart and drained your hope. Come and see Jesus.

Confess Jesus. When Jesus opens our hearts, he also opens our mouths. Confession of faith is confession of Jesus. Ask yourselves, how would you confess Jesus, what would you say to him, if he was standing in front of you.

WHEN OUR HEARTS OPEN
OUR MOUTHS OPEN



What happens when Jesus opens our hearts?
Jesus also opens heaven.



2. JESUS IS A HEAVEN-OPENER (50-51)

When Jesus opens our hearts for us, he also opens heaven to us. In response to Nathanael's heart opening, Jesus said, **"Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (50-51).** "Because of what I said to you, your heart has opened and you've believed. That's great. But watch what happens next. You're going to see something even better. "You will see heaven opened." Sin closed our hearts to God and heaven to us. Therefore we need both our hearts opened and heaven opened, and the latter is even more amazing than the former.

Clearly referencing Genesis 28:10-22, Jesus tells Nathanael, I am the fulfillment of Jacob's dream." He is God's ladder, or God's stairway, to heaven. What kind of ladder is Jesus?

A long ladder: It reaches all the way to heaven and all the way to earth. Angels don't need to jump on or jump off. There's no gap at the top or the bottom. Jesus came down so we can go up.

A safe ladder: The Son of Man is a perfect ladder with two perfect legs, perfect humanity and perfect divinity. This is a stable and unshakeable ladder that will never fall or fail.

A busy ladder: Angels are going up and down continually, bearing our needs to God and bringing God's help to us. Soon you will see communication between heaven and earth thrown wide open and more happening on this ladder than ever before.

A single ladder: There is no other ladder like this in all the universe. They all come short on God's side or our side. All communication between heaven and earth is via this ladder.

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Praise God for this ladder. How can God come so low? How can I get so high? Only through Jesus opening hearts and heaven and bridging the gap between them.

Get on this ladder. It doesn't matter how low you've sunk, it can reach all the way down. It's right beside you at the bottom of the pit you're in.

Stay on this ladder. Some of you have been on this ladder for years, and you're coming to the end of your years. The Devil is trying to shake your ladder and loosen your grip. Whatever he tries, stay on it, grip tightly, and don't let go. Jesus will take you the whole way.

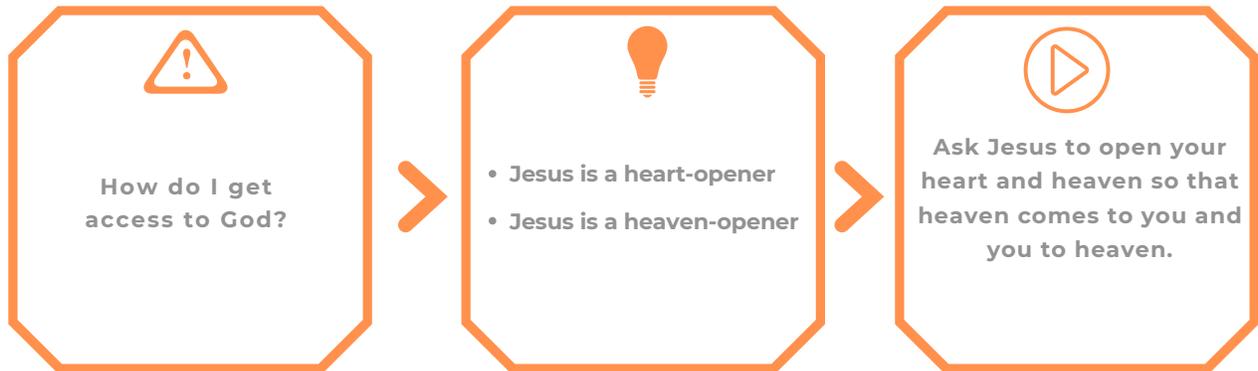
JESUS OPENS
WHAT WE CLOSED



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Share the story > Change others' stories



SUMMARY



PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank you for being my ladder.
Bring heaven to my heart and my heart to heaven. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe a time when heaven was 'shut' to you?
2. Why does sin shut our hearts to God?
3. Why are cynicism, skepticism, and negativity such a barriers to spirituality?
4. What do you think happened under the fig tree?
5. Why do we need a ladder and how had the ladder helped you?
6. How would you present Jesus as the ladder to an unbeliever?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 878-9768
www.firstbyroncrc.org

Pastor David Murray
www.HeadHeartHand.org
www.livingthebible.net