

The Fire Came Down - And They Worshipped

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[0 : 0 0] I'm going to sing to God's praise some verses from Psalm 78. Psalm 78 at verse 68, singing to the end of the psalm.

Psalm 78. Psalm 78.

Psalm 78.

Psalm 78. Psalm 78.

Psalm 78. So much did love. And Jesus died to all the events.

[2 : 1 2] Life to the palace night.

He was pleased.

He brought them far to thee.

Israel is the inheritance. Israel is inheritance. His people.

So after thee. So after thee. of sea. So after the integrity he always heard and said I'm by the good still of his hands then why is it ever dead?

[4 : 3 5] Shall we for a short while turn to the passage read, 2nd Chronicles and we'll read again the beginning of chapter 7. Now when Solomon had made an end of prey, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the house and the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house and when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down and the glory of the Lord upon the house they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped and praised the Lord saying for he is good for his mercy endures forever and so on.

Continuing our study where we're looking at some of the aspects that the scripture present to us of the glory of God in many respects it's a a reasonable reasonably easy task to find places in the scripture where we are confronted with God's dealings with his people in the world where his glory is brought to our attention but it shouldn't be simply a matter of randomly choosing passages like that although I suppose that's what what we're doing but reminding ourselves of what we actually expect to achieve by looking at such passages there are many situations within the scripture and we might not think that there are lessons to be learned from these that they are simply set before us by way of record but we're always reminded and required even to to see what it is that we can learn from these events that the

Lord has seen fit to set before us and I think it is something that is a feature of our own generation that God has lost his mystery he has lost his mystique so many have endeavoured within the church even to bring God closer to ourselves and the argument would be that because God has seen fit to come close to us in the second person of the trinity then it should be the case that the holy otherness of God is something that has been removed from sight that should never be the case it should never be the case that God becomes so ordinary in our sight that we forget that there is nothing ordinary about it should it shouldn't surprise us if the world and those who are of the world should demythologise

God in a sense or rather make it the other way round make him nothing better than a myth of equal properties to the other myths that exist in the world and God is not a mythical character he is God overall he is the creator he is the one and only potentate of this world he is the one to whom one worship is due he has existence in himself he depends on no other and before any other existed God was God if you remind yourselves of the words of the prophet Isaiah and Isaiah often saw himself as someone who was confronted with this holy otherness of God he writes for us or his words are recorded for us thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity whose name is holy

I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones he is high and lifted up he is lofty he inhabiteth eternity and his name is holy even in that short statement you realise that the god that is the god of Isaiah is a god like no other god we are also familiar with the words that we have at the beginning of the prophecy where the prophet himself is face to face with the god coming down into the temple in the year that king Isaiah died I saw also the lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and his train filled the temple above it stood the seraphims each one had six wings and with twain he covered his face with twain he covered his feet and with twain he did fly and one cried unto another and said holy holy holy is the lord of hosts the whole earth is full of his glory and the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke and the impact upon the prophet then said

[11 : 40] I woe me for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for mine eyes have seen the king the lord of hosts words I'm sure you're familiar with but it is a description of who God is and what God is and the effect that he has upon eyes that are unveiled in his presence now God has not changed God does not change and the same God is the God that we confront in the scripture on any occasion and every occasion that he chooses to reveal himself to us and the words of our text today bring to our attention a very specific experience in the life of

King Solomon and I'm sure again you're familiar with this occasion even the prayer most of which we read is a prayer that like no other that you can go to and think about and wonder at how this prayer can be your prayer in certain situations that you may find yourself in the words that are so direct and so apposite that they need to be understood as purposeful but I want us to I suppose take in the whole compass of what we've read here thinking first of all of the background that is to the prayer and a very brief word about the prayer itself because there's so much in the prayer that we can't really spend too much time other than to note some of the things that he prays for but then finally the revelation that the worshipping people of

God are given of the glory of God and the effect that it has upon them when Solomon built the temple we know that he was doing something that his father David had purpose to do he wanted to build a house for the Lord and in chapter 6 I think in the earlier part of that chapter he talks about that I have chosen Jerusalem that my name might be there and I've chosen David to be over my people Israel now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel and so on but David's purposes were not God's purposes and David was not permitted to build a house for the

Lord but interestingly although David is prevented from building the house at the same time that the prophet brings the word of God to David insisting that he is not that he doesn't have that permission God teaches him that he is going to have a house from God built for him that God is going to build a house and that David would be the one from which that house would descend that it would be his seed and his descendants that would follow on from him and from that seed which would be a spiritual seed God was going to bless this world he was going to provide the promised

Messiah and mediator from the seed of David and it seems so extraordinary that while David was not permitted to physically build the temple that he was given this promise from God and it just reminds you of how remarkable God's ways are when we think in our own lives and in the plans and the strategies that we may create for our own lives for our own spiritual lives how often could we say that our purposes are thwarted and our plans are distracted or turned upside down and yet God's plans come to fruition and they're better than ours and they're more to

[17:18] God's glory than ours could ever be and when you look at the temple that Solomon built although it was not David who built it his plans were the plans that Solomon put into practice it was the place that David planned to build the temple that the temple was built it was the finance that David gathered that was used to build the building it was even the the artificers and those that were to be involved in the building itself that David purposed to use that Solomon had put his hand on to get them to build and chapters 2 to 7 describe to us the various aspects of the building of the temple the way its dimensions are planned and set out under

God's direction no doubt and the building the structure itself and the contents of the structure that that all speak of we have to remember that these this temple speaks of something spiritual speaks of God's promise and God's provision of a temple that is not built by hands speaks of the future glory that this temple but foreshadows that is the provision of God equally so or even more so and we read of how David brought the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem and then Solomon brings the ark to take its place in the temple and the detail of that is brought to our attention the holy vessels for worship and the taking of these vessels to the temple are themselves an act of worship which seems ironic the temple was the place where

God was going to presence himself and the people of God were to gather to that place where God would be present but in the construction of it and in the preparation for the worship of God they themselves are involved in an act of worship as they bring the various parts together if you remember at the end of chapter 5 it came even to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the Lord saying for his good for his mercy in Judah forever that then the house was filled with a cloud even the house of the Lord so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud for the glory of the

Lord had filled the house of God they are worshipping the Lord as they come to bring the elements for worship to the place of worship and God presents himself in a very visible way in their midst and the cloud that fills the place there is reminiscent of what we saw before in the book of Exodus where Moses could not enter the tabernacle and the cloud had come down the Shekinah glory as it became known as filled the temple filled the tabernacle filled the space for worship of God with the presence of God so that they were in offered and

God again makes his presence felt in the cloud and here we are confronted by that and it's interesting well I found it interesting how similar events you could almost say that they were identical and the impact upon those who were present differ the sense of God's holiness prevented Moses from entering into the presence of God we noticed that before when Moses went into the mountain into the presence of God and on this other occasion he couldn't go because the presence of God was so awesome would require to be answered but maybe we don't have a sufficient answer for them

[23 : 30] I was reading Matthew Henry he's quite careful I always I find him very careful and cautious about his answers to certain questions like that but what he does is he takes us into the New Testament and he talks there of the mediator of the new covenant and the glory that belongs to the presence of the Lord there and he feels more comfortable with dealing with this Old Testament occasion in New Testament language whether it is advantageous to us or not but with the prayer of dedication that follows the king speaks to the people and then offers a prayer kneeling on a large platform that he had constructed for that and you saw the prayer it's so detailed and we're not going into the detail of it but the emphasis is upon the holiness of

God and the way that whatever they do whatever advantages they gain whatever blessings they derive whatever sins frustrate these blessings God is always the one that confronts them in these things what God gives them to them that is good he is to be honored and praised for it what God deprives them of because of their sin God is to be acknowledged and they are to repent of these sins and to return to that God his holiness is always brought to mind and the temple is spoken of as the place that God will dwell forever and at the same time when Solomon and remember Solomon has prayed for wisdom and

God has granted him wisdom so that the wisdom of Solomon was not equaled by his like in any generation and in his prayer he acknowledges the presence of God in the temple that he calls the house of God this is where he will be he says but if you read through the prayer again and again he says God's place in the heavens he speaks of it in several occasions in verse 25 hear thou from the heavens and forgive the sin of thy people Israel God is in the heavens again and again he identifies him as being in the heavens hear thou from heaven and forgive the sin of thy people of thy servants at the same time in the same prayer he recognises that God is the God whose presence is in the temple in his temple and that's not confused thinking but it is a recognition that

God is everywhere but he is most especially where he is worshipped where his people are seeking his favour and his face in worship and as well as this being a prayer of dedication it is a prayer of intercession for all the people and for any sin that they may be guilty of it is full of confession he says in verse 30 hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place and forgive and render unto every man according unto all his ways whose heart thou knowest for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men that they may fear thee to walk in thy ways so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers I think these words are words that any child of God can go to and they are persuaded at that moment that if they are on their knees before

God there is no possibility of them being hypocritical there's no disguising what they are in the eyes of God there is no wailing of their heart in the presence of God he is the God who searches the heart he is the God who whose eye is upon all the areas of our life whether we choose to acknowledge them or not it is a prayer that is full of petitions replicated in every generation suited well even to our own even though we might not think so the king speaks to the gathered congregation and he wants them to understand the burden that is there collectively in serving the Lord and that how at the heart of the worship that

[29 : 00] God seeks from them is the understanding that it must come from a heart that is pure a heart that is fervently deciding the God of heaven to make himself known to them let me give you a quotation from A.W.

Tosser says God wants worshippers before workers indeed the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the art of worship that's something worth considering Paul says that what our acceptable service is spiritual whatever we do even what we consider to be an act of work rather than an act of worship it's nothing of the sort if it's spiritual it is a worship an act of worship and we seldom think of it like that or speak of it like that well the final thing the time is gone but the final thing is what brings us to this passage but it's not just uniquely this passage that speaks of the glory of

God as we saw God's glory is revealed in fire coming down from heaven and some of the experiences we have looked at and some of the experiences that we may yet look at it reminds us of the awesome impact that that may have on the onlooker but some of those that we spoke of it was spoken of as an individual experience and sometimes it was the experience of an individual who was seeing it in terms of a vision or in a dream state but here it is more than that it is God coming down in fire and the whole congregation are witnessing the glory of God in that way the children of Israel saw the glory of God and it was a revelation to them and to

Solomon of the acceptance of God of the sacrifices offered and the intercession that was made on their behalf now you would think that such was the experience that they had that it would drive them away from this place and we have seen that and we understand that that can sometimes happen that the glory of God when it is revealed such as the terror that fills the heart of the individual who encounters it that they cannot sustain their presence there they have to turn away from it but here the declaration that they make is not a slavish fear but they bow their heads before God and they worship him they bow their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worship and praise the

Lord saying for he is good for his mercy in Judah forever why is that what is the difference between a situation where they are so full of fear and alarm that they are driven to silence and this occasion where they are stimulated to praise and to worship well the response we have to acknowledge is one that God intended it is not the response of ignorant people but a people who at that moment in time who by God's grace appreciate who their God is and what their God seeks from them notice in the prayer of Solomon how much emphasis is placed upon the worship of

[33 : 48] God wherever they are and in whatever circumstances they find themselves and as that has been brought home to them no doubt by the power of the Holy Spirit God draws from them the worship that he himself requires and the worship that he himself deserves and we should never ever overlook the fact that we are created for God for the worship of God that is the prime reason for being created by him and while we have departed from the innocence that permitted that to be fulfilled in our experience God in his infinite mercy allows us occasions where that innocence is recovered even temporarily and he himself becomes what fills the vision of our soul and heart and we worship him contentedly we worship him without embarrassment

I don't suppose it happens often but I would not ever say that it doesn't happen at all I can't say that because it seems to have happened here that notwithstanding the experience when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down and they saw the glory of the Lord upon the house they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped and praised the Lord well at the heart of that worship was a recognition of who the God that they worshipped was and what they were in his sight and yet there was something in it for them that allowed them to do that there are many mysteries attached to the way

God deals with his people different settings different occasions but surely they are an encouragement to us to think about these things further may God bless to us these few thoughts let us pray Lord do not allow us to in any way imagine that you are anything other than the God who is high and lifted up who sits upon the throne of the almighty God that you are you are without equal and holiness is something that you are bathed in and we are far from any such experience we pray for your mercy in our foolishness if we mishandle your word and if we fail to comprehend what you mean us to learn from it we pray your blessing upon the congregation here and all its needs and we remember those of that number who may need to be remembered to you and we give thanks that when we remember them to you you are the

God who is the almighty a God who knows us and knows our needs forgive our sins we pray in Jesus name Amen I'm going to conclude singing to God's praise from Psalm 136 and the last two verses of the psalm in Gaelic or singing in Gaelic the last two verses 106 to No abris 8 oh 116 then from 106 or People 136 lapsta themas times basicimal that■■■ Apparently is The Un pinned held on the Nile Barana■■ária Okei P the end utans mal y pratic du mal deframes utund kita habis

Thank you.

[39 : 53] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen.