

The children

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[0:00] Okay, have we got any boys and girls here this morning? Yeah, yeah, yeah, great. Okay, good. Right.

I'm just going to say to the grown-ups here a little bit about the subject, and I'm going to come back to you in a moment because we're going to look at children. So I want you, while I'm doing this bit, just to think if you can remember your name.

It might take you a minute because I'm going to ask you about your names in a minute. So what we're going to think about this morning is the importance of faith in the Christian life. The importance of faith, living by faith, walking by faith.

This is important. Another word for being a Christian is to be a believer, somebody who has faith. Jesus often put his finger on faith.

He said, I can't remember, I think this was the woman who had bleeding, was it? Your faith has healed you. Faith was key. Paul talks about justification by faith, by believing.

[1:10] When you become a Christian, you put your trust in Jesus Christ. You turn to him and put your trust in him. As we live the Christian life, we walk by faith.

That's the text I read at the beginning. The life I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. This is an essential in our relationship with God.

If we don't trust him, we don't have a relationship with him. To have that relationship is, as it were, to put our hands into his hand, which is faith. Faith is to do with his word.

We take him at his word. If he promises something, we trust him. If he says something, we believe him. And it links up with our worship and our devotion to him. We respect that he means what he says.

And even listening to God's word and hearing it with faith is an act of devotion to him. So faith is really important.

[2:13] And it's not just New Testament. It's not just New Testament believers. The Bible is full of, from beginning to end, the idea of faith. The God of the Bible is a God who forms personal relationships as people trust in him and put that trust into practice.

And if we were going to go through Hebrews, we'd have that Hebrews 11 list of heroes of faith. Now, faith. Trusting. Trusting people.

Different people in their lives have different experiences of this. And different people in their lives can feel that they have been badly let down by people they trusted.

And the persons let them down. And that's a horrible thing. But that shouldn't prevent us from putting our faith in God. And it shouldn't prevent us wisely putting our faith in people.

Because I don't think personal relationships are possible without rightly placed trust. And you sort of measure what you can trust people to do and what you can't necessarily trust them to do.

[3:26] But with God, he can be trusted. God is the best person to trust. Because he wants our best good. He has the power to honor his promises.

And his very nature is stability and faithfulness. So, faith is this important thing. And there's...

I'm a Calvinist. So, I believe that faith is a gift of God. But I also believe that faith is something to be exercised. And I put the word choice there. And I don't think that's the wrong word.

In practice, every step we take in life, we are sort of choosing. Shall I do this in faith? Shall I do it not in faith? Shall I trust God in this or shall I not? Sometimes we have to be quite strict with ourselves and say, Now, you're thinking of doing this.

Why are you thinking of doing that? Are you thinking that because you trust God? Or are you thinking of doing that because you don't trust God? Now, which is it going to be? So, choice. And this is what this bit of Isaiah is about.

[4:25] So, that's my introduction. Let's say a prayer. And I'm going to ask the boys and girls. Lord, as we come and think about this, We pray that it won't be just talk. Pray that it won't be just words.

But that we will actually ourselves be people of faith. And learn to be people of faith. And to take you at your word. And to live that way.

Do help us, we ask. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Right. Boys and girls. There's some children in this bit of the Bible. And three of them.

And they've all got names. And these are their names. Sheer Jashub. Do you have anybody that you know called Sheer Jashub? Would you put up your hand if you have anybody in your class or any of your friends whose names that?

No. Nice. And Maher Shalal Hashbaz. Now that must be a very common name in anybody. Do you do registers in class these days?

[5:28] Where they go down and say, John, Mark, John, yes. Mark, yes. Bethany, yes. Sheer Jashub. Maher Shalal Hashbaz, yes. Do you do that now? No?

Maybe not. Okay. And this other one called Emmanuel. Has anybody got anybody that they know called Emmanuel? I think we had somebody stayed with us called Emmanuel.

So that one's a little bit more common name. Okay. So I've put the three of them there. Sheer Jashub. Maher Shalal Hashbaz. And Emmanuel.

And we're going to go through and look at each of them and see what their names mean and what God wants us to learn from them. But first, I've got to tell you where they lived. Because they didn't live in Brighton, as you probably realize.

So this is a map. This bit here is the Mediterranean Sea. And that bit there is Cyprus. That's a Greek island.

[6:27] And that's where Maria's dad lived there, in that bit, Paphos. So it's a real place. Now then, do you know... Anybody good at geography?

Because I want to know some more places here. That's the Mediterranean. So anybody know where Jerusalem is on that map? Oh, yeah, go on.

Yeah, have a go. Yeah, pink circle with a dot is Jerusalem. Okay, so this all takes place in Jerusalem, which is just there. Right. Let's think somewhere else.

That's the home where these children lived. And their country had two parts to it. So there's this bit in the south, Judah, and then that bit in the north, which is called Ephraim or Israel.

So there... It's a bit... It's not like having East Sussex and West Sussex, but it's like having the southern bit and the northern bit. And they weren't always very friendly to each other. Right.

[7:35] Now then, does anybody know the next bit? So they were a threat. They were a threat. Threat meaning that they thought maybe soldiers would come from the north and attack them.

Does anybody know which of those is Aram or Samaria? You'd have to be really good at geography to know this. Any of the grown-ups know which of those is Aram or Samaria? Yeah. See, none of the grown-ups.

Oh, yeah. The Red Circle. The Red Circle. Yeah, it's that one. It's the Red Circle. Thank you very much. That was a threat as well. So they were worried...

In Jerusalem, they were worried about soldiers coming to attack them. And anybody know which bit Egypt is? You think it's the yellow circle?

Anybody? Any advance? I can't hear it. The which circle?

[8:44] The Red Circle. This one? This one? So who said that one?

This is Egypt, is this? I think you deserve a round of applause. Well done. Difficult questions this morning, aren't they? I'm going to ask you your name, but you'll probably get that bit right in a bit.

Assyria. Any suggestions which of those circles would be Assyria? I'm not even sure I know, actually, so I'm just going to guess. I think it's that one.

And they're based down here, and they're really bad. They're really strong armies. And so you really want to worry about Assyria. And then the next circle is Babylon.

And Babylon, again, sort of based down here somewhere, they came later in history. So there's a little map of where they were and what they were worried about, because they're worried about enemies coming and attacking them.

[9:51] Right. That's where they were. And what happens next? When? Oh, yeah. A little bit of history. I bet you can do this.

Thinking of that map. Thinking of that map. Where did the Israelites go from and to with Moses? Where did the Israelites go from and where did they go to with Moses?

This is doable, this question. What do you think? From Egypt to the promised land? Egypt to the promised land? Yeah, you're right.

I think. Well done. Yes. Round of applause. Well done. From Egypt to the promised land. So they went from here to the promised land. So they left Egypt and they entered the promised land.

[10:50] And then they had a king who united the whole of the north and south. Do you know the name of the very famous king in Bible history? Famous king.

The first proper king. He was really good. You say David. Any advance on David? David is correct. Well done. Yeah. And then it split into the north and south. Which is where we've got this business of the north and south. And then the people in the kingdom were worried.

Are we going to get attacked? You know we've got enemies in the north. Are they going to be our friends or enemies? And what are they going to do? And so they were worried and scared.

In the reading that Jerome read. They were scared because this country there and that country had gathered together.

[11:54] And they said we're going to get together. And we're going to attack you. And we're going to squash you. And we're going to stamp on you. And we're going to put our own king.

So there. And I don't know if anybody noticed how scared they were in the reading. Did anybody notice how scared they were? It said they.

It said the hearts of the king and his people were shaken. As. Did anybody notice it? The grown up tell us.

Shaken. It's verse. Verse 2. Chapter 7 verse 2. How shaken were they? Grown up.

Like the trees. Yes. Like the trees are shaken by the wind. Okay. The trees are shaken by the wind. And they go. And it says.

[12:53] Sorry about this. The hearts of the people went. Like that. Have you ever had something that you think.

Oh I really don't want to do this. I don't want to do this. And in your tummy you get little butterflies going around in your tummy. You do that? No. I do. Yeah.

You and me together. Okay. Oh. Is it working? Their hearts were shaken.

And they were really worried. Because we're going to be attacked. And we don't know what to do. Okay. So that was the situation that these children lived in.

They were. In the end. They were invaded. By Assyria. And then later than that.

[13:47] Assyria just got that far. And then later. They were invaded by Babylon. And they just. The Babylonians took them all away. Into exile. And it was a horrible thing.

Okay. And that's where we are in the story. They're worried what's going to happen. That's where we are in the story. So let's look at the children. Chapter 8 verse 18 says.

Here am I and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty who dwells in Mount Zion.

So this is Isaiah and his little family with his children. Perhaps he had some other people staying with him. You know theological students or lodgers or something like that. And they're a little group of people who actually are trusting the Lord.

And it says that they're signs and symbols. So then they were signs and symbols. So let's just see if anybody here has got a name that is a sign or a symbol.

[14:51] So I'll start off with my name. My name is Philip. And Philip is made from two Greek words. Philo which means I love.

And ipos which means horses. Hippopotamus is a horse of the river. Hippopotamus is I think.

That's right isn't it? So I love horses. Apparently according to my name. Do I love horses? Not really no. No. So my name doesn't really work as a sign or a symbol.

I thought we would see. Is there anybody here called Isaac? Okay. Now then do you know what your name means? Do you know what your name means? Laughter.

What does your name mean? Your name means laughter as well. That's spooky isn't it? Okay. Yes. So laughter. Yitzhak means he laughs. So there you are.

[15:49] You're laughing. So that works. That's great. Okay. Let's just see. Anybody called Daniel? Ah. Now then. Does your name mean something? Something? Mark?

Mark's going to tell us? God is judge. Is it God is judge? Apparently it is. Okay. Right. So a little round of applause for two names there.

Well done. Yeah. Now then. Is anybody here called Bethany? Right. Does your name mean anything? What does it mean? House of figs.

House of figs. So not syrup of figs but house of figs. Yeah. Excellent. Good. Right. Nice. And so anybody here called Freya?

Yeah. Now does that name have a meaning? Noble lady. Oh wow. Yeah. Okay.

[16:54] I haven't done everybody's names but it just shows that there are names that have meanings. And these children had names with meanings. So Shere Jashub means.

Oh. Sorry. I can't wait. Come to that in a minute. Here are the three of them again. So let's look at what they're named. So this is Shere Jashub. Shub means to turn. And Shiar.

I don't know how you pronounce it. Means a remnant will return. Do you know what a remnant is? A remnant is a bit left over. So if you've eaten your Weetabix and there's a little bit left in the corner when you finish.

That's a remnant. It's a little bit left over that you didn't actually eat. A remnant. And this is a remnant will return. Think that's good or bad?

Boys and girls. If you, if you, if this young person, it's a sign or a symbol. And here in this situation, there is this person.

[18:01] Do you think that's a good name or a bad name? What do you think? You think it's good. Why do you think it's good? A little bit of good.

Yeah, excellent. So there's a little bit of good that a remnant will return. So they'll come home. So that's good. I think that deserves a little ripple. Well done.

Would anybody like to say there's anything bad about that name? It's a shame they all won't return. It's a shame they had to go away in the first place. So there's a little bit of both there. Okay. So let's, let's look at the story then. So in chapter seven, there's Isaiah with a beard.

And he takes his son, Sheer Jashub. And they go to meet the king at the end of the aqueduct of the upper pool on the road to the washerman's field.

[19:09] There we are. So they go to going to meet. And Ahaz says, hello, Isaiah. And Isaiah says, hello, your majesty. And then Ahaz says, oh, you brought one of your nippers with you.

And Isaiah says, yes. And Ahaz says, what's his name then? And Isaiah says, Sheer Jashub. A remnant will return. And King Ahaz says, oh, I'm not sure whether that's good or bad.

Anyway, so they, so at this point, there is the threat of the two northern kingdoms ganging together to attack Ahaz. And they're fearful.

And in 8 verse 12, they dread. They're in dread. 8 verse 12, do not fear what they fear. Do not dread it. And God makes a promise.

In chapter 7, verse 7, he says, it won't happen. What you're worried about won't happen. It will not happen.

[20:15] It will not take place. So I'll just say that again. What you're worried about won't happen. You're worried you're going to get squashed by these two kingdoms.

You won't. God says, it won't happen. What you're worried about, you don't have to worry about because it won't happen. That's his promise. And in chapter 7, verse 9, he says, listen to this.

If you don't stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. That's the key verse. If you won't stand firm in your faith, you won't stand firm at all.

God is saying, if you don't trust me, there's no alternative.

You have got to trust me on this. You've got to stand firm in faith or else you're sunk. If you don't stand firm in faith, you won't stand at all.

[21:20] And She'er Yashub is there with the king and his dad is saying, this is the situation.

What you're worried about won't happen. Stop worrying. Trust me. Now, what's He going to do?

And before I go on, I'm going to say, this is exactly true for Christians. This is exactly true for Christians. We must stand firm in faith or we don't stand firm at all.

We live in a world full of challenges. We live in a world that's far bigger than we are with forces and situations far bigger than we are.

And God says, you've got to trust me. You have got to trust me. And if you don't trust me, you're sunk. If you don't stand firm in faith, you won't stand firm at all.

[22:29] And you think of all the things that we could potentially worry about. You think of all the things that we could dread that make us go like that inside.

And God said, look, I'm making promises to you. If you don't stand firm in faith, you won't stand firm at all. So we could think about future ministry.

For us as a church, we could go like that. And God says, look, I have made promises that you can trust me. But I do hear prayer. Stand firm in faith.

For different people, there's issues of our personal future. Where's God going to lead me? How's God going to provide for me?

And the Lord says, you're going to have to trust me on this. You know, you may not see the answer. But I have it in my hand. And if you don't stand firm in faith, you're not going to stand at all.

[23:28] And present providences, meaning that God has put us in certain places at certain times with certain people. That's his providence.

And God says, I don't make mistakes. I put you in the right place at the right time. That's not saying that you stay there forever. But I put you somewhere.

I put you in a certain place. I knew what I was doing. You've got to trust me on this. We might say, but Lord, you've completely messed up on this, this, this.

No, look. In my providence, I put you in the right place at the right time. You've got to trust me. If you don't stand firm in faith, you won't stand firm at all. And God's provision, which John Piper wrote a book called Faith in Future Grace, which I think simply means standing on God's promises.

But he says, he's looking forward to the future. Will God continue to provide for me? Will God continue to bless me? Will God continue to deal with me in patience? And God says, of course I will. That's what I do.

[24:35] And if you don't stand firm in faith, you don't stand firm at all. So we will face these challenges one way or another, but we have to respond in faith because that's the way it is.

So there's Sheer Jashub. And a remnant will return. And that child's name pops up in chapter 10, verses 20 and 22.

In that day, the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the household of Jacob will no longer rely on him who struck them down, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return.

A remnant of Jacob. And what I didn't say was that King Ahaz didn't trust the Lord. And when this crunch came, he said, no, I'm not going to trust God's promises.

I'm going to do a deal with Assyria. It'll be okay. And God said, that is just the worst possible thing to do.

[25:38] That's the worst way of solving your problems, is to go in the exact opposite direction and do a deal with the enemy. And that's what Ahaz did. He did a deal with Assyria.

And instead of Assyria protecting him, Assyria came down and sort of swallowed them up. Or came down, swallowed up the northern kingdom. That's why it said all about this, about the eraser will be hired from beyond the river and come and...

Like that. So, he didn't trust. A remnant did return, but he didn't actually trust. But the fact that the remnant will return, there is goodness in that, isn't there?

That even... He doesn't deal with us as our sins deserve. But he was merciful and saved a remnant by grace.

You had the same idea of this in chapter 1, verse 9. Unless the Lord Almighty had left us some survivors, a remnant, we would have become like Sodom. We would have been like Gomorrah. A remnant by grace.

[26:50] And I just want to ask you, how come you're here today? Is it because you are so spiritually intelligent all through your life and so virtuous that that's why you're here?

Or is it that God said, well, I'm going to spare that person by my grace. They don't deserve it. I don't want to see them chucked in the rubbish bin. I'm going to spare that person and lift them out of their sin and bless them and forgive them and cherish them.

A remnant saved by grace. Is that why you're here this morning? Because Sheer Yashub, a remnant, will return. Not deserving, but by God's kindness. And I think if the Lord didn't save a remnant by grace, we'd all be sunk, wouldn't we?

So let's look at the second child. Maher Shalal Hashbaz. Now, who was it who said they had one of those people in their class? Anybody say they had?

[27:56] Maybe I misremembered that. This means quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil. It's a great name to have, isn't it? It's like saying my name means that the enemies will come quickly and jump on everybody and squash them to pieces.

Not quite a nice name, wouldn't it? Bethany, would you prefer that name? No, I don't think you would. So what this name says, it's a very efficient enemy who comes with speed and is unstoppable.

And I don't know, mums and dads, if you have any more kids, I would say, don't choose this name for your child. But there we are.

And is that good or bad? Is that a good name? Is that a happy name or a not so happy name? What would you say? What do you think? Yeah, bad. It's not a very happy name, isn't it? And every time the teacher went through the register and said, are you here, maher shal al-hashbaz?

They'd be thinking, what an awful name to give to a child. I think, Bethany is a much nicer name than that. Yeah. Okay. So we're going to look at chapter 8, verses 3 to 6, which is about this child.

[29:09] I went to the prophetess. She conceived and gave birth to a son. And the Lord said to me, name him maher shal al-hashbaz. Before the boy knows how to say my father or my mother, the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.

So it is a bad name. It's saying, the enemy will come. You know, the enemy will come. And here is the consequences of trusting wrongly.

So as I said, King Ahaz did not decide to trust the Lord, but instead he did a deal with the king of Assyria.

And that deal backfired and Assyria could not be trusted. Assyria will invade. This is what Isaiah is saying.

Don't trust those Assyrians. They won't protect you. They'll destroy you. They will invade. And it's there in chapter 6, chapter 8, verse 6.

[30:14] And it says this, because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloh, and, I would say, makes a fuss over Rezin, the enemy king, the son of Remaliah.

Therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the river, the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow its banks, run over its channels, sweep on to Judah, swirling up, passing through it, reaching up to the neck over your land, O Emmanuel.

Well, let's come to Emmanuel later. But this is saying Assyria will invade. And the reason is that you chose to think more about that little king that you were threatened by than the Lord.

So you had a choice. And the choice was a gently flowing river, the gently flowing waters of Shiloh, or what you chose to was that horrible river which came and flooded you all.

And there is something gentle here. The gently flowing waters of Shiloh. And I think there's something there which reminds me of Jesus who is gentle and makes kind offers.

[31:36] And here's kind offers from the gentle Savior, Jesus. You know, he says, if you're thirsty, come to me and drink.

He says, if you're weary, come to me and rest. He says, if you're sinful, come to me and be forgiven. And these are gentle and lovely promises.

And he says, why don't you trust in those? The gently flowing waters. Because if you don't, you're exposed to the huge, overwhelming floodwaters of death and hell and destruction.

So there's the gentle waters. And somewhere in there is the great overflowing waters. And he says, you know, really, there's a choice of which one you will go for.

And I want to say, wouldn't it be hugely better to not reject the gentle flowing waters of the promises of Jesus Christ?

[32:40] It would be better to embrace those rather than expose ourselves to the flood. In verse 12, he puts this choice this way.

Don't call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy. Don't fear what they fear. Do not dread it. the Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy.

He's the one you are to fear. He's the one you are to dread. And he will be a sanctuary for both houses of Israel. He will be a stone. Come to the stone in a minute.

A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. But let's come to the stone in a minute. But it's saying instead of in your mind's eye thinking that this risk and that risk and that problem is the big thing in your mind's eye say the Lord is the big thing.

The Lord is the one who is holy. He's the one who really matters. He's the one who looms large. It's his purposes. He's the one I really care about.

[33:52] Of course that's the focus we lose isn't it? Because we look at the other things instead. But here it says the Lord Almighty is the one you are to revere and think about and have big in your thinking.

Put the Lord Almighty on the throne. Him to love. Him to trust. Him to fear. Put Him high. We're going to come to the third child in just a minute.

Can we sing this song now? Turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

Amen. Please be seated. Let's look at this one more child to look at and this is Emmanuel. He's a little bit different to the other children.

The other children were Isaiah's children and it's not at all clear that this child, Emmanuel, seems to be a bit different. He's a sign given by the Lord.

[35:06] I put verse 14. That's yeah. Chapter 7 verse 14. God is so keen to get Isaiah to trust, to get Ahaz to trust him.

He says, look, ask me for a sign. I'll give you a sign. If you'll trust me. And Ahaz says, I don't think I'll bother with that. And the Lord is exasperated.

He says, is it enough for you to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?

Okay, the Lord will give you a sign but it won't be quite the way you expect. And the sign is the virgin will be with child and give birth to a son and call his name Emmanuel.

Now does anybody know what Emmanuel means? Okay, it's between you and Julia. Right. Oh, and Corinne knows as well.

You have the first go because you're first. You think it's God with us? What do you think it is? Okay. Smart move. Anybody else have a hand up?

[36:10] What did Julia think? Oh, you thought God with us and there was a hand over here. Okay, well, yeah, that's right. Okay, a round of applause for everybody. Well done. You're doing really well today.

Okay, the name means, is that good or bad? Is it good or bad? What do you think? Good. I think it's good. I think to say that God is with us is really good.

And it says whatever else happens if God is with us, that's good. So I think that deserves a round of applause. Well done. Good. Yeah. So this child's name now pops up in chapter 8, verse 10.

It says, devise your strategy. It will be thwarted. God is with us. Emmanuel. And what do we know about this child? He's a sign given by the Lord. He's born of a virgin or a young unmarried woman.

It seems a bit strange because in those days if you weren't married you wouldn't have a child.

Perhaps it means that she will get married and have a child. But what it says is she's a virgin.

[37:16] A woman not yet married. What's going on there? And we find out later on what was going on there. And he will eat curds and honey.

Does anybody know what curds is? Do you know what curds is? What would we call curds? Corin. Porridge.

Do you want to do it? Is it something like yogurt? Clotted milk. Clotted milk. Oh, we've got all sorts of possibilities here.

When I went to Sri Lanka and they gave me curds it was like yogurt. It was sort of yogurt made from not cow's milk buffalo milk I think.

So it says of this child that he will eat curds and honey. Anybody like honey? No. Don't like honey.

[38:14] Wow. And it says that he owns the land or it seems to say he owns the land. Chapter 8 verse 8 its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land. Oh, Emmanuel. So he's a bit different.

He seems to own the land. And I think he's the same person that's mentioned in chapter 9 verse 6. For to us a child is born a son is given the government will be on his shoulders.

He will be called wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father prince of peace of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever the zeal of the Lord almighty will accomplish this.

I think that's who it's talking about. Mmm. There's the honey. And I think he's also the person in chapter 11 where the Assyrians chop everything down so it doesn't grow but in one place it grows. it grows back. Chapter 11 verse 1 a shoot will come from the stump of Jesse from his roots a branch will bear fruit the spirit of the Lord will rest on him. So there's a stump I've drawn a stump see that with something popping up out of it and bearing fruit.

[39:31] So I think this Emmanuel is the same as all these different people. And who is it? Sorry about the noise. Who is the person who's who a mother had a baby when she wasn't even married?

Who is the person who owns the land? Who is the person who is the king? Who is the person who springs up like a branch and even gets called the branch?

And who is the person who sits on the throne of his father David forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever? Who's that person? We don't know do we? Some of us know. What do you think?

You think it's Jesus? Who do you think it is? You think it's Jesus? Jesus. Right. Anybody else? Yeah.

Okay. Round of applause for everybody there. Yeah. He's this is talking about Jesus and he is the sort of real key to everything here.

[40:37] Oh I put the crown on the on the head there. He's different from the other children. He's a sign. He's all these things and when the angel comes at the birth of Jesus he will say he will be great.

He will be called the son of the most high. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and ever. His kingdom will have no end. The angel was talking about Jesus and Jesus is fantastic.

Jesus is brilliant. Jesus is the key to all this. He is the absolute center of this and when it comes to faith he is the absolute center for faith. He's the key to everything.

Who is the key? Jesus is. And let me just come back to the stone because that was it's not a stone isn't a key but it's a stone is a stone.

In chapter 8 verse 14 it talks about a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Now have any of you been to the historic dockyard in Portsmouth?

[41:45] Have any of you been to HMS Victory? The famous British sailor Admiral Nelson was on that.

He got shot didn't he? He fell. He died. And there is a little sticking up stone thing which says Nelson fell here.

I nearly tripped over it myself actually. It's something that you it says he fell. It was a little joke really. But stones you can trip over them.

You can do two things with stones. You can stand on them and get higher and firmer or you can trip over them and you can go all over the place. And Jesus is like this stone.

You either stand strong and firm on him because you accept his promises and you trust him and give your life to him or you can trip over him and mess everything up.

[42:51] Trip over and fall forever. A stone. The trouble is you can't avoid him. You can't say he doesn't really exist. He never said anything or he never did anything.

You can't do that because he's there. And he's that stone. And for each of us he's either going to be a stone that we stand on firm forever or a stone that we trip over and fall over.

Like the choice of the water either take the gently flowing stream or risk the flood and here's the stone you either stand on it trusting or you trip over it.

And I'm just going to leave us with this thought which is it going to be? Which way are we going to live? What are we going to do with Jesus in this sense?

And I'm going to say to Christians people who profess to be Christians we too have a choice don't we? every day how am I going to react to this situation? How am I going to live in this situation?

[43:59] How am I going to see myself in this situation? With all the challenges that come up how am I going to react to them? With losses and crosses because the Christian life has losses and crosses the Lord gives the Lord takes away blessed be the name of the Lord.

He doesn't promise just to give and give and give he sometimes takes away how are we going to respond to that? And crosses where there's something that we don't particularly like. Remember Jesus carried a cross he didn't particularly like it and he says if you're going to follow me you're going to have crosses sometimes.

Well maybe all the time. How are we going to respond to losses and crosses? And this text is saying if you don't stand firm in faith you don't stand firm at all. We have to yield to Christ's lordship and walk in faith that's the only alternative otherwise we're completely sunk.

So let's put our trust in the lord Jesus. Let's be people who make him great in our minds take his promises take him at his word and walk by faith.

We're going to sing from the squalor of a borrowed! stable by the spirit and a virgin's faith Emmanuel who came as the baby Jesus.

[45 : 23]