

The Ascended Lord

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Date: 12 May 2024

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0:00] Well, we're going to begin our worship now, and our first psalm of praise is Psalm 68. Psalm 68, that's in the Scottish Psalter, page 301.

Tune is St Andrew. We're singing verses 1 to 5. Let God arise, and scattered let all his enemies be, and let all those that do him hate before his presence flee.

As smoke is driven, so drive thou them, as fire melts, walks away. Before God's face, let wicked men so perish and decay, but let the righteous be glad.

Let them before God's sight be very joyful. Yea, let them rejoice with all their might. Verses 1 to 5 in Psalm 68. Let God arise.

For Christ unscathed him, let all his enemies be, and let all those that do him hate before his presence flee.

[1:26] Let them rejoice with all their might.

Now■■■rin Dr. John ahoneties, even though his ihmics be, and let all those to Oliver Walsh are given from their lives from their estaba biomarked.

Should every time be king, let them grow with all our might. God's side, in many joy, who yield and can rejoice with all their minds.

We all sing to His names in praise, extraordinary when your voice and lies on Him by His name John, before His face rejoice.

Because the Lord the Father is, until the Father rests.

[3:28] For this the way, O stars within, is grace of holiness.

Let's unite now our hearts in prayer. We're going to call upon the Lord in prayer. Amen. Gracious and Almighty God, we give thanks that we tonight are appearing before this God of whom we have been singing.

God who is so immense in His might and power, in His authority, in all aspects of His being. We thank you, Lord, for the privilege of being able to draw near to you and to do so in a way that is not intimidated by your greatness.

And for we have come, O Lord, before you tonight to use that new and living way that you have opened up for us, that we may have access into your presence, that we may come even with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive grace and mercy in our time of need.

Lord, bless us, we pray, as we come together in this way and as we together call upon your name and sing your praises and dwell our mind upon your word. We ask again that you would draw near to us and by your Holy Spirit bless us so that your word may find lodgment in our hearts.

[5:00] Give us, Lord, we pray, to increase in our knowledge of you and our commitment to you in all aspects of what we ought to be in love and in belief, in faith, in hope.

We ask that all of these and all our other graces that come from your Spirit might be multiplied in our hearts. We thank you, Lord, for the life we enjoy as a congregation of your people, for the way that we are enabled together to progress those matters that are on our weekly bulletin sheet, not only in the worship services of the congregation, but also, Lord, in the many other activities that we engage in and that we seek from you, your blessing, that they may be blessed to us.

We ask again, O Lord, for this coming week that you would be with us in all that we anticipate taking part in. We thank you for the facility of being able to draw near to you and draw together from those privileges that we have.

We pray that you would bless us, Lord, as we set out these gatherings and groups of various kinds. We ask your blessing for our children, for our young people.

We pray that you would continue, Lord, to bless them in Sunday School and Bible class and also in Twinnies and in Cresce, in all the activities that take place relating to them from week to week.

[6 : 28] Bless them, Lord, we pray, and bless their homes and families. Be pleased, we pray, to strengthen them in these difficult days against all the attempts that are made to take our mind away from the principles of the Gospel and from those ways of life that are pleasing to you.

And we ask, Lord, that you would provide us with further help in teaching our young people in Sunday School. We pray that you would move some in the congregation to offer themselves for that work and give them, Lord, we pray, a burden for these young souls.

We pray that you would grant us that provision, O Lord, at this time, for we would want to see your own cause advance amongst our young people and children. And we pray, to that end, that you would provide us, Lord, with that help.

We pray, too, for all other meetings anticipated this week, for the prayer meetings, for the annual meeting, for the 55-plus fellowship. Lord, we ask that all of these might be blessed by you and may be of benefit to all who attend.

We thank you again for your upholding of us through this year as we reflect upon another year and find another report of the year's life in the congregation.

[7 : 49] We ask, O Lord, that we may continue to depend upon you. And as we face various restrictions and challenges, both financially and in other ways, in such times as we live in, Lord, we give thanks for those who uphold your cause financially, for those who pray for the ministry of the gospel, for those, O Lord, who themselves would want to see your cause flourish.

We pray that you would continue to provide for us with these resources, and that you would help us in all the activities of the congregation to see that growth that we pray for and yearn for.

Remember those of particular responsibilities in the congregation. Help those who are in office, both as elders and deacons. We commit the life of the session and the deacon's court to you.

We ask, O Lord, as we set about our tasks from month to month, that you'd be pleased to bless us. Give to us the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Bless those who are involved, Lord, in leading the congregation in praise.

We thank you for all of them, both in English and Gaelic. We pray that you would provide us with further resources in that regard as well. Maintain us, Lord, we pray, in a way that would, in a healthy fashion, reach forward in witnessing and testifying to you in the community we belong to.

[9 : 17] We remember, Lord, also all others who help in the congregation. Remember the various groups that meet from time to time, and we ask that you would continue to bless them too.

And be with Marianne and with Roddy and with Lizzie as well in their tasks, and with all who help with the live stream and with the IT system that we have.

We thank you for them, and we pray that you would grant us, Lord, that we may continue to have these resources provided for us and people who are sufficiently active and interested in them.

Bless, we pray, all the congregations of the town. We thank you for the ongoing witness of your people in different denominations, and we pray that you would continue to bless us, Lord, in our generation with people who will take up the burden and the responsibility and the privilege of serving you openly and testifying to your grace.

And we ask, O God, that you would continue to hear our prayers for your cause in our midst, in our locality. Bless those who are involved in various activities in our community as well.

[10:33] We thank you, Lord, of those who provide us with nursing care and expertise in our hospital and hospice, in our care homes, in our surgeries and in our clinics.

We ask, O Lord, that all of these will continue to be blessed to us and that you'd bless those who are actively involved in them. We pray that you would grant blessing to those who help us in our times of bereavement and sorrow.

Bless the undertakers who so willingly give of their time and of their gifts. And we thank you for their demeanor and the way in which they so willingly help bereaved families virtually every week of life.

Bless those, Lord, in the congregation who are bereaved in these days. And we ask that you bless them as they experience the pain of loss. Grant to comfort them, we pray, and guide them in your way and draw them to yourself and speak to them, we pray, and to their pain so that by your own comfort they may advance from day to day.

And so be pleased to bless us now as we further wait upon you here. And in all of these things, we ask, O Lord, that you would forgive our sins that we now confess before you.

[11:48] And we pray that you would cleanse us from our iniquity. Wash us freely, we pray, and present us before you as clean in your sight. Grant all these mercies to us, we pray.

In Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise. This time our psalm is Psalm 130. 130. That's on page 421.

The tune is Martyrdom. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. My voice, Lord, do thou hear, and to my supplications voice give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall stand, if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity? But yet with thee forgiveness is, that feared thou mayest be. We're thankful to God for all these great contrasts that he brings us in his word.

The contrast here in Psalm 130 between what would be the case if God were to hold our iniquity against us and mark them against us forever on our account.

[12:52] The contrast between that and the wonder of his forgiveness that he so freely bestows. So Psalm 130, the whole psalm. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.

Amen. Amen. Amen. To thee I cried.

My voice, Lord, do thou hear. Unto my soul, the gracious voice And the gospel voice And the glory of God, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity?

Lord, who shall stand, if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity?

I can't with thee forgiveness is that near the mercy.

[14:17] I wait for God, my soul not wait, my hope is in His word.

For that may die, for glory watch, my soul rich for the Lord.

I say, Lord, I may come to watch the morning light to see.
Let Israel hold with the Lord, for with Him ever cease to be.
Thank Jesus' redemption, it's ever come with Him.

[15:49] And from all His daily riches, He is the child redeemed.

Now let's turn to read God's word now. Our reading this evening is from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4. And we'll read from the beginning of chapter 4, down as far as verse 16.

Ephesians chapter 4, from the beginning. I, therefore a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness and patience, bading with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, when He ascended on high, He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.

[17:22] In saying He ascended, what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.

And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

So that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

[18:38] Amen. And may God again bless to us, reading that portion of His Word. We'll sing again in Psalm 76 this time. Psalm 76, that's on page 99 to a tune martyrs.

And we're singing verses 1 to 7. In Judah's land, God's name is known. In Israel, He is great. In Salem, He has pitched His tent.

His home in Zion set. He broke the fiery arrows there, the military might of those who with their swords and shields against us came to fight.

Your splendor is more glorious than hillsides rich with prey. Brave men were stripped of all their spoil. Asleep in death they lay. Not one of those great warriors could lift his hands to kill.

At your rebuke, O Jacob's God, rider and horse lay still. For you alone are to be feared. Before you, who can stand? Who can endure your anger, Lord?

[19:45] The judgments you command. These verses then to the tune martyrs in Judah's land. God's name is known. God's name is known.

He is great. In satisfaction from the Great Lakes Is the Son of God The Holy Child The will and dirty might of those who with their swords and shields And his love came to light Your splendor is more glorious

On hillsides rich with rain They've been western of all their spoils Our sweet red dead they live No one of those great warriors To lift his hands to kill And you renew, O Jacob's God My God and heart stay still

For you alone are to be feared Before you who can stand Who can endure you and the Lord The judgment you've all done If you turn with me please now to the book of Psalms and Psalm 68 Tonight we're going to look mainly at verse 18 You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train And receiving gifts among men Even among the rebellious that the Lord may dwell there

Blessed be the Lord who daily bears us up God is our salvation Our God is a God of salvation And to God the Lord belong deliverances from death Well it's no accident that you find the words of verse 18 Coupled with verses 19 and 20 Verses 19 and 20 that speak of the Lord Who upholds his people Who is a God of salvation And to him belong deliverances from death It's no accident that that is closely related to What you find in verse 18 The Lord ascending on high Leading a host of captives in his train And as we read in Ephesians chapter 4 As you well know these words are taken by the Apostle Paul And quoted in Ephesians chapter 4 To fit in with the emphasis that he's giving there Of the Lord and his church

[24 : 24] And the provision he has made for his church He's especially concerned to emphasize there in Ephesians 4 The various gifts that Christ has bestowed upon his church To endow his church for the work that he has given his church in this world And on into the next And in this psalm we find a wonderful emphasis all the way through It's really in a sense a military psalm A military type psalm Which speaks of the exploits of God As he goes before his people And as he gives them the capacity and the power to overcome their enemies We need the Old Testament here and the New Testament To fully explore the contents of this psalm But especially where we come to Jesus Where we come to his death and resurrection And as we're looking at tonight His ascension to the throne of God on high To the Father's right hand And so the psalm really begins with that great cry

God shall arise or let God arise Let his enemies be scattered And these words were in Numbers chapter 10 They were associated with the carrying of the ark forward Chapter 10 verse 35 I think it is They were carrying the ark forward And whenever the ark was to move forward The people were to cry Let God arise And let his enemies be scattered Because the ark of caution in itself represented The dwelling of God amongst his people So that as the ark moved It was symbolical of the Lord being with his people Moving with his people And setting out as it were ahead of his people To lead them against whatever difficulties and enmity They met with on the way But then the psalm moves on To speak about a battle scene And a victory scene And a procession of victory

As you find here in verse 18 especially And ending with the Lord on his hill Near the end of the psalm But also an emphasis on dispensing the spoils As we'll see the spoils of victory As these are dispensed to his people Fitting in with what you find in Ephesians Chapter 4 The Lord dispensing the various gifts That he has actually obtained for his church As a consequence of his own great work of redemption in Christ And so as we look at these We can see tonight that these are emphasizing The privilege that God's people have Of having this God not only in their midst But going before them Because the same principle follows through From what you find in the psalm And in the Old Testament And Ephesians Chapter 4 That same principle remains for us today

That God goes before us That God is with us That God in our midst is mighty That none of his enemies will overcome him And therefore none of the enemies of his church Will overcome them either Because they are led by him And they are safe in him You know that in some church calendars Some denominations Anglicans for example And others They have what's known as An ecclesiastical calendar There are certain days appointed through the year That they in a rota year by year Actually associate with certain aspects of biblical truth And apparently we don't follow that Not that I'm saying there's anything wrong with it But last Thursday was what's known as Ascension Day A day that's focused on the ascension of Jesus To the right hand of the throne of God on high And although we don't mark that as a day The ascension of the Lord is really hugely important for us

It's something perhaps we don't give as much attention to as we should We do give attention more to the resurrection of Christ The death of Christ The resurrection of Christ Perhaps even the intercession of Jesus at the right hand of God But the ascension in itself is also critically important To our understanding of what really forms the basis of our redemption in Christ Because the ascension of Jesus is something that sets out the Father's acceptance of him And of his work beginning with his resurrection from the dead And then that moving into his ascension Where he is taken from earth to heaven And now sits at the right hand of the throne of God And so thinking of the ascension Tonight we're looking at that in the light of these words in verse 18 But also of course as we said taking account of the fact that That is all fitting into the New Testament emphasis too

[29 : 35] So we're looking firstly at the Lord's ascension in victory And then secondly at the Lord's distribution of gifts to his church In consequence of what he has done and of the ascension itself And of course Ephesians 4 reminded us that you cannot think of the ascension Without thinking first of the incarnation of the descent of the Lord of Jesus Of Christ the second person of the Trinity You cannot think of his ascension without as Paul saying First of all thinking of his descending He descended into the lower depths of the earth By which he meant his death He came into the world specifically to give himself as a ransom in his death for his people And that precedes logically It precedes not just logically but theologically It precedes his ascension It's only as he has died and then risen from the dead Or been raised from the dead It's only then that you can think of his ascension

But his ascension to the throne of God on high As it logically follows his death and resurrection So it also theologically follows Because the Lord's approval, the Father's approval of him Is set out and approval of his death As fully sufficient for the salvation of his people Is set out and everything that follows on And then they come to the gifts that he bestows upon his church as well So the incarnation is an important fact that precedes the ascension of the Lord But as you look at the ascension You ascended on high Leading a host of captives in your train The first step towards the ascension As we said is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead We have to take these things as factually and literally correct These are not the Bible setting out things symbolically

As if there was no actual physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead That's a popular opinion That's something that we find difficult to accept Until the Lord lays it upon our hearts And opens our minds And opens our heart to the fact of that That if there's no actual resurrection It's not all that long ago We took some time to go through 1 Corinthians 15 Where Paul very emphatically says If there has been no resurrection from the dead On the part of Jesus Then there is no point to the gospel There's no salvation for us There's nothing of the kind of life That Jesus in the Bible has said to bring to us The eternal life Everything stops If Jesus has not been raised from the dead It ends with his death That's it Finished So there's no resurrection for us afterwards either Life is done When you die When your body is laid into the grave

That's it Paul is saying If that's our opinion If that's what we think We are of all people most to be pitied Our faith is in vain Our preaching is in vain There is no point to anything of what we're doing tonight If Jesus isn't at the right hand of God tonight If Jesus hasn't in fact literally Risen from the dead And been raised from the dead by the Father You know that yourselves But Paul saw fit to emphasize it For the church at Corinth And we need to re-emphasize it for ourselves That our salvation deals with facts The fact of the incarnation The fact of the death of the cross The fact of Christ's burial The fact of his resurrection And now the fact of his ascension To the right hand of God And it's important that What's important certainly In the theology that we follow As Reformed theology It's important that we Think particularly of the continuity

Of the person of Christ All the way through That this is not a different person Who ascended on high After he died on the cross It's the same Jesus The same person And the same person of the Godhead As well Second person of the Trinity The Westminster Confession of Faith Which we use in our church And have been using Ever since we were established As a church It says in chapter 8 verse 4 On the third day He rose from the dead With the same body In which he suffered And that's an important emphasis He rose from the dead With the same body In which he suffered With which also He ascended into heaven And there sitteth At the right hand Of his Father Why is that important?

[34 : 37] Because the continuity Of his person Is important for yourself And myself That we can see That in this one person Of Jesus Christ All the way through From the incarnation To the death of the cross The resurrection On to ascension It's the same person Death has not interfered With his person Death hasn't done anything To stop that whole process Of incarnation Death Resurrection Ascension to glory And that's part of What lies for us tonight As the basis of our hope Our hope For eternal life And remember Philippians 2 Verses 11 to 9 Tells us How high Jesus Has been set In his exaltation His ascension to heaven And his exaltation And session At the right hand of God God has highly Exalted him How highly Is Jesus exalted

How highly Is the saviour Tonight Whom we worship In our worship service How high is he He's at the right hand Of God What does that mean It means he's as high As you can possibly Conceive of And indeed If you followed Professor John Murray In one of his comments In his volume One of his volumes Not even God He says Could conceive Of a higher Than the position That Jesus occupies Because it's Deserving of The highest Possible place That God Could give him In consequence Of all that he has done And that's where he is And that's where he is Until he returns To earth But that is his position That's his status That is the saviour You believe in That's the saviour We worship That's the saviour We expect to come back To this world Not some puny figure

And not even The son of God In the incarnation As he came In the form Of humanity Bearing the sin Of his people He will come As he now is The glorious Exalted Ascended Son of God And that's what we Hold out As part of What we hope Towards On the day That Jesus returns But there's a procession Here is the Lord's Ascension and victory Incarnation Followed by ascension But there's a procession Mentioned here And it's picked up again In Ephesians Quoting this verse You ascended on high Leading a host Of captives In your train When you go to the older Authorized version The way that's Translated there He Leading captivity Captive And possibly That's a better way

Of translating What you have In the text Of the psalm You ascended up on high Leading captivity Captive Or you led Captivity Captive What does that Actually mean?

Well it means Essentially That Those who held Us the powers That held Us captive The powers Of sin The power Of satan By the death Of jesus By his resurrection By his ascension The picture you have Here is of these Great powers Greater than Ourselves These powers Being vanquished These powers Now being overcome By the lord He has as it were Led them away In triumphant Procession Displaying them As defeated enemies In ancient times That would have Been the practice If a general Went out With his army Against enemies And overcame The enemies The Romans Especially Were very much This was very much Their practice Though it wasn't Confined to them If the general Came back If he had been Victorious in battle And he made his way Back to his homeland It was often The practice That those That he had defeated Or a great selection Of them anyway Would actually be dragged

[38 : 54] Usually behind his chariot Brought back To be put on display As defeated enemies So that everyone Could see That this general Had been successful And victorious In battle And these His enemies That had Fought against him Were now completely And utterly overcome They were chained They were made Slaves behind him That's Our Jesus That's the Lord In his ascension To glory That's the position He occupied That's what was put On display The principalities And powers As Paul calls them These great Spiritual forces Of darkness That held us Captive They were put To flight They were overcome By the Lord When you think Of Jesus Ascending up On high Here is what you find Spiritually And theologically True

About that Great procession You think of Jesus Just imagine him Ascending up On high You couldn't see This necessarily For yourself Of course But spiritually And in the unseen world This is what was Taking place His enemies Were being dragged Behind his chariot Of triumph As he went To take his place At the right hand Of God And isn't that Why so often The psalmist Himself says In regard to God being His salvation And his salvation Being in God Whom shall I fear And that's why Paul in Romans 8 Echoes that same Emphasis That same Sentiment as well Who shall separate us From the love of God In Christ Jesus Not even death He says Nor principalities Nor powers Things present Things to come Not even death

Because death Has been overcome Death is dragged By Jesus As he rose From the grave As he ascended To glory There you see Death as the wages Of sin overcome And there is death Defeated For us Tonight Are you still Detached As it were From Jesus Is your life Tonight Lived by faith In him Through trusting In him Is your life Joined to his And is your life Joined to him In victory Over death And over all his And your enemies Is the triumph Of Jesus Your triumph Tonight Not unless Your trust Is in him Not unless You've put Your life In his hands Not unless You're joined To him In such a way That his victory Becomes your victory And his ascension Becomes your ascension When it comes That's the great privilege

Friends we have This is what the gospel Sets out for us This is what we seek To emphasize In the preaching Of the gospel That we worship A victorious Savior An ascended Savior A savior Who has dragged Behind him Victoriously All that stood In enmity Against him And against his people You ascended On high Leading captivity Captive Remember how Paul Again put this Very similarly At least in His letter To the Colossian church The Colossians Were facing All kinds of False teaching That sought To draw them Away from Jesus being Fully complete And sufficient As their savior That they had Many things To do themselves By which they reached Step by step By their own efforts Towards final victory Well In the Colossians Paul in chapter 2

Of Colossians In verses 13 to 15 Was teaching them And is teaching us here As we read it Where he speaks of Being buried with him In baptism Raised with him Through faith In the powerful Working of God Who raised him From the dead And you Who were dead In your trespasses And in the uncircumcision Of your flesh God made alive Together Or in union With him Having forgiven us All trespasses By cancelling The record of debt That stood against us With its legal demands This he set aside Nailing it to his cross And then listen To what's next He disarmed The rulers And authorities And put them To unopened shame By triumphing Over them In him You see That's Psalm 68 He put them To unopened shame These powers These spiritual forces

[43 : 58] Of darkness He put them To unopened shame Triumphing over them In the Lord And in the cross And his resurrection And all that followed Putting them on display And really that's part Of the gospel call As well isn't it That we emphasize Your need And my need To come to Jesus Because the Bible Presents us As in enmity Against God That's our natural State Our natural state Of mind Our natural bias Of soul That we are in enmity Against God But God has come To provide Reconciliation For us in Christ In other words When the Bible Calls us to come To Jesus When he gives us That invitation And call Come to me And I will give you rest What he's really saying Following the military language If you like Of this Psalm Is lay down Your arms Of rebellion Don't keep them up

Against the Lord Lay down These arms Lay them at his feet And say Lord you Who defeated sin Who defeated the devil Who defeated These forces of darkness I give myself To you I lay down My rebellion I lay down My arms Of rebellion Against you Against you And I place them Here before you And I want you To rule over me And not them You led captivity captive He ascended on high Leading a host Of captives In your train The Lord's ascension In victory And how it's Very much related Practically To our salvation And our experience Of salvation And our comfort Indeed In salvation That this is Our God Our Saviour The Lord Jesus Christ And then the Lord's Distribution of gifts

To his church You notice what it then says Receiving gifts Among men Even among the rebellious That the Lord May dwell there There's a difference Really In A difference of emphasis In the Ephesian text To what you find here In the psalm The psalm says You received gifts Among men Or for men Whereas Ephesians Speaks about He gave gifts To men But there's There's no Contradiction there What it's really saying Is when you take Both together The Lord received By virtue of His resurrection And ascension He received gifts In order to Dispense them To his church So he's giving them out After receiving them By way of A reward If you like For What he has done And it's distribution Dividing the spoil Was a practice When armies

Came back Victorious Very often They brought back The spoils Of war These would be Distributed Amongst the people That they themselves Belonged to And different kinds Of spoils If you like And in verses 11 and 12 In the psalm You find The same thing Emphasized there Or similarly There's the picture there The Lord gives The word The women Who announce The news Are a great host The kings Of the armies They flee They flee The women At home Divide the spoil And so on You find the emphasis There What happened Literally As you think About it Spiritually God Jesus Dispenses The gifts That Ephesians 4 And let me just Remind you Around ourselves Of what it says Where Ephesians There Speaks about The dispensing Of the gifts That Jesus Has obtained For his church In saying He ascended He descended First of all

Far above now All heavens He's ascended And he gave The apostles The prophets The evangelists The pastors And teachers There are his gifts That's what he bestows In consequence Of obtaining them For him By his death And resurrection And ascension And To equip The saints For the work Of ministry That work Of ministry Is not just The ministry Of the gospel And preaching The gospel It's ministry That's carried out In a wider sense By the Lord's people And the Lord Has gifted His people He's gifted Especially as we'll see The Holy Spirit To his church But all of this Is so that His church Will grow That we may No longer be Tossed to and fro Carried about By every wind Of doctrine And so on Speaking the truth In love All of that passage Really speaks About God Jesus dispensing The gifts To his church To enable them To grow Towards Final maturity

[49 : 03] That's a great Privilege Tonight You know There are many People throughout The world Tonight Who would Dearly love To have a Regular ministry Of the gospel Who would Dearly love To have The bible Explained To them Preached But they don't Have that They don't have Access to that They're dependent On books Good books And so on They're dependent On hearing From time to time Somebody coming To explain The bible To them And here we are In this community What a great Privilege There is That there's A free access To the gospel And to the preaching Of the gospel And to the worship Of God And yet all these Pews are empty Last week we heard Derek Maxwell Reverend Derek Maxwell Speak about Work of SGA In Ukraine And other places In Central Europe He spoke especially

About Ukraine And the effects Of the terrible war That still rages In Ukraine But one of the things He did say And make clear And he was very Moving in saying So How the church Has grown How people Are pressing Into places Of worship Because they see That the devastation Of this war Has really taught Them and shown Them the things Of this world Are essentially Valueless Compared to The salvation And compared To eternity And these people Are coming And saying Well These things That we've lost They're earthly Things They're precious Things But they're gone But we want Something that Cannot be taken From us We want the life That God promises In Jesus Christ And there was a Wonderful story He told about A count of A seminary Or college There Which had been

Hit by a Russian Missile And virtually All destroyed And gone up In flames Apart from The library Which held Many irreplaceable Books That library Was untouched While the rest Of the building Went up in flames Not only untouched But he said There wasn't even The smell of smoke From any of the books Contained in that library Why was that?

Why would the Lord Protect these books? Well because As he showed In his next slide That place Has 880 students Studying The word Of God You see When war comes Terrible as it is Devastating as it is We'd never want To see it But one thing The Lord Teaches his people Is The value Of what's precious And what is not precious And the importance Of things That are his gift To the church Rather than What we might say Are our contribution And these material Things especially You received Gifts For men Or amongst men Gifts purchased Procured Given out By Jesus And the one Grand objective You see That's mentioned here Above the rest You see He's mentioning

It's for the rebellious Even for the rebellious That's you and I But even for the likes Of us God has done this Jesus has ascended Up on high For the benefit Of rebellious Sinners Who come through Salvation To enjoy The gifts That God Dispenses to his church Does that not amaze You tonight Does it not amaze You that You and I Who are naturally At enmity with God Are the very people The very kind of people That he died for And rose from the dead for And ascended up to glory For To dispense gifts to us That we would enjoy In this life And enjoy throughout eternity What a great God How different In his mercy In his grace In his forbearance In his love To what you and I are By nature ourselves This is the grand objective That God has That the Lord God

[53 : 38] May dwell there Or dwell amongst them The presence of God The gift of the Holy Spirit Through which God comes To inhabit his church That's the great objective In the exaltation And ascension And ascension Of Jesus Because after he had sat At the right hand Of God on high As Acts chapter 2 Demonstrates for us Verses 32 to 33 As Peter spoke And preached As to what had happened In the coming of the Spirit This Jesus He says Who was crucified He has poured this out Which you now see And hear You see it's Jesus Dispensing the gift Of the Holy Spirit Upon his church In Eden We were driven out Of the garden Where God dwelt With us Mankind

Rebelled against God And rightly And justly God closed the gates Of Eden And said No you can't Go back there And he placed A flaming sword And cherubim To keep The way it says Of the tree of life There was no going back That way And it's even more amazing That God provided Another way That he opened up A new and living way As Hebrews 10 puts it That is through the flesh Through the person Through the incarnation The death The resurrection The ascension Of Jesus And where You might say That On the gates Of Just imagine On the gates Of Eden It's as if God Had placed a sign Saying Here God Once lived But he's no longer Here He's gone He's deserted The place And the man

The mankind That lived here With him There now Outside But then When you take that Forward into the New Testament You find something Amazing taking place The crisis Of Eden Is answered In the crisis Of the cross And the resurrection And the ascension Of the Lord Because when you Come to Calvary It's Jesus That's outside It's Jesus That's taking The curse It's Jesus That's going to die In the place Of his people And having risen From the dead And overcome Death And ascended To glory He dispenses The gifts That he purchased To his people And they are Still being Distributed The gifts That God Gives To his people Not just Endowments The spirit

Of God And so on Of course Central to it But there are Various gifts That he gives To his people In the work Of the gospel In the work Of the church There are Some that are Given Gifts In order To be Elders In the church Gifts To be Deacons In the church Gifts To work Amongst Young people Gifts To work With older People All kinds Of gifts They all Flow From the Ascended Lord They all Come from His Wonderful Position At the Right hand Of the throne On high And they're All preparing Us Those of us Who trust In the Lord Tonight They're preparing Us These gifts Are part of The way God's Preparing Us For our Final state In glory With him Remember how It is with Revelation At the end Of the Bible The Revelation Chapter 21 Verses 1 To 4 And I saw A new heaven And a new earth For the first

Heaven and the First earth Had passed away And the sea Was no more And I saw The holy city New Jerusalem Coming down Out of heaven From God Prepared as a bride Adorned for her Husband And I heard A loud voice From the throne Saying Behold A dwelling Place of God Is with man He will dwell With them And they will Be his people And God Himself Will be with them As their God He will wipe Away every tear From their eyes And death Shall be no more Neither shall There be mourning Nor crying Nor pain Anymore For the former Things Have passed away It's as if Jesus is saying To us tonight Don't cry Not that there's Anything wrong With weeping And there are times When we need To weep Weep But we don't Weep In despair When our trust Is in him Instead we say

[58 : 45] And we hear him Saying Weep no more For he has Prevailed He has ascended On high Everything we need Is already in himself As the psalmist Said in psalm 23 Surely goodness And mercy Will follow me All the days Of my life And I will dwell In the house Of the Lord Forever And as Jesus Said in John 14 Where he spoke About going to Prepare a place For them Where he actually Drew the mind Of the disciples As to where He was heading What would happen After the cross If I go To prepare A place for you I will come again And receive you Unto myself That where I am There you May also be And the Lord In his ascended Glory tonight

Through the gospel Is assuring you And assuring me Assuring us together That when our trust Is in him When we live Through faith in him When we accept him As he is In all his fullness For us as saviour This is our future What a glorious future It is Is it your future?

Is it my future? Well your relationship To Jesus Is what establishes That for you Let's pray
We thank you Lord tonight That we Know that you are Set at the right hand Of the Father
On high We thank you Father That you sent The Son Into the world That he came To give
his life A ransom For his people We thank you That all he did Was acceptable In your holy
sight And that you come To give to us In your word That record Of his death And
resurrection And ascension To glory And Lord we pray That you would Grant us faith To
anticipate His return So that we may be Ready to receive him In his glory When he comes
Make us ready Lord we pray For that great day For your word Encourages us To prepare
By using the means That you have given us Help us to be thankful

As we look out Over this fallen world As we see the devastation Of this world As we see the enmity In men's hearts Being carried out In atrocities And terrible situations Against each other O Lord Point us We pray To that great fact That remains That you are set Above all these things That you preside over them In your sovereign power And that you have ascended To the throne on high To assure your people That you continue to reign And that your will is best Hear us we pray now For Jesus' sake Amen Well let's conclude tonight By singing in Psalm 110 It's one of the great Messianic Psalms As they're called Psalm 110 On page 149 We're singing to the tune Dennis Verses 1 to 4 And of course

Jesus himself In the Gospels Quoted from this psalm To set forth His own Authority and status As he spoke To the people The Lord said To my Lord Sit here At my right hand Until I make Your foes a stool On which your feet May stand The Lord Will make your reign Extend from Sion's hill With royal power Your rule among Those who oppose Your will When you display Your power Your people Flock to you At dawn Arrayed in holiness Your youth Will come like dew Unchangeably The Lord With solemn purpose Swore Just like Melchizedek You are a priest Forevermore These verses The Lord said To my Lord To my Lord Sit here

[63 : 15] At my right hand Until I make Your foes a stool On which your feet May stand The Lord Will make your reign Exceed from Sion's hill With royal power Beautiful and high Those who oppose Your will When you display

Your power Your people Fall to you At dawn The great In holiness Your youth Your youth
Will come Like dew And change And change And lead The Lord With solemn Power The
storm Just like Melchizedek In holiness That make You are A priest Forevermore

I'll go to the main door After the benediction Now may the grace Of the Lord Jesus Christ
The love of God the Father And the communion Of the Holy Spirit Be with you now And
evermore Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Ihnen Well Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen
Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen

Amen Now Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen