

Dedicated to the Lord

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Date: 01 February 2009

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[0 : 0 0] I'm going to turn again to that chapter, 1 Kings chapter 8 and verse 62, page 347.

Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the Lord. Solomon offered us peace offerings to the Lord, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep.

So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord. And then again, verse 65, so Solomon held a feast at that time and all Israel with him, a great assembly from Lebohamath to the brook of Egypt before the Lord our God seven days.

And they went and they blessed the king and went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had shown to David, his servant, and to Israel, his people.

I think I've told you on one or two occasions in the past that eight years ago, I visited India. It was the one and only time I've ever been to India.

[1 : 1 9] I'm not sure how many of you have been there, but it's one of the most fascinating places in the world. I had been invited by a student that we had in Aberdeen who had started coming to our church and he was one of the lowest caste in India.

He was a Dalit, which is one of the castes, one of the untouchable castes. And this guy was a really clever guy who had worked very hard and had come through the university system and was now on the way to an academic career.

And he was also a very bright Christian who was with us and worshipped with us in our congregation in Aberdeen. And one day he came to me and said to me, he says, I've got really good news for you.

He says, we're building a church in my home village. Now, for some odd reason, which I can't figure out, his home village, it's a tiny wee village in the back of beyond, had decided to be Christian.

I'm not sure how widespread that was, but they had decided that they weren't going to be Hindu and they weren't going to be Muslim, they were going to be Christian. And they were going to build a church in that place.

[2 : 3 0] So I kept asking him, you know, from week to week, how's the church going? And, you know, how is it doing? And one day after several months, he came to me, he came running to me, and he says, you know, he says, I've got great news for you.

He says, we've finished the church. And he said, I've got even better news for you. We want you to come and open it. Now, I'd never been to India in my whole life before, and it seemed like a terribly long way away.

And I knew that the Foreign Missions Board and our church would not exactly be very happy about paying my way to go to open an obscure church in an obscure village in India.

But we were so friendly, the two of us, that I decided, well, I've always wanted to go there. Let's go. So off we went together to this tiny wee village. And sure enough, there was the church in the middle of this village.

When I say a small village, I mean a small village. It was absolutely tiny. They had never, ever had a white person living there before. Many of them had never seen a white person in the flesh.

[3 : 31] And it was really quite strange. Some of them would not even look at you, because not only were you white, and not only were these people accustomed to all kinds of persecution, I'm not sure how much you've read about the incredible persecution that's been through the centuries of the Dalit people, incredible atrocities, which have been done to them throughout their history.

And it's only now that really they're beginning to enjoy some form of human rights. In any case, they were going to open this church, and I was asked to take a service in opening the church.

And it wasn't just a service. It was a massive, massive event. This was a church they had been building for many, many months. They had gathered a lot of money for it. And these people just didn't have money.

They had raised money. They had fundraised. And it was a bare church. There weren't any seats in it or anything. There were no windows. Of course, you didn't need windows because it's so hot. And the place was just a bare shell.

There was no plaster or anything like that. It was just bricks and a roof. And that was it. There was a platform. There was no pulpit or anything. It was just a platform. And I can tell you that that place was absolutely packed the time that it was on the day that we opened the church.

[4 : 49] We opened the church. There must have been, there was about 500 people in the church, and there was probably another 500 people surrounding the church, looking in windows, climbing on each other's backs, trying to see what was going on.

It was the most fascinating, incredible experience that I think, one of the most incredible experiences I've ever had in my life. give me just a little insight into the way that the gospel is spreading in some of these wee places.

Now, who knows? I often wonder how in the world is the gospel progressing in that wee part of the world I'd never, ever heard of before. It was in the middle of nowhere.

There were hardly any cars. And anyway, what I was coming to was this. After the opening, there was a feast. And I mean a feast. And round about, they provided food for hundreds and hundreds.

I've got pictures. Maybe I'll show them to you one night on a Wednesday. Hundreds of people stayed behind for this feast. And it wasn't just a cup of tea. It was a meal.

[5 : 58] It was a proper meal for which they had killed goats and sheep, and they had all kinds of vegetables and rice. And the thing was, there was no running water. There was no electricity.

There was no cooking facilities. There was no kitchens. Nothing. And yet, there was a meal provided for all of these people for which they had saved and anticipated, and for which this was a red-letter day, because they were opening this church.

For them, the opening of the church was a tremendous occasion. It was quite incredible how the opening of a church and all that that meant for them, that here was the place.

It wasn't as if the building was sacred. They knew that, that the building wasn't a sacred place in itself. But they had some knowledge, even in a very primitive way, of the significance of what was happening on that occasion.

And as I read, I always read this chapter we read together with that in mind. We're remembering that day that we opened the church in this tiny little village in India, and all that's happening, because something similar is happening here.

[7 : 17] Because there are masses of people having gathered together in Jerusalem for the opening of the temple. And each one of these people, I have no idea how all these people were fed, and yet they were fed.

The chapter specifically tells us that all of the people who had gathered there that day were fed. So Solomon held the feast at that time, and, verse 65, and all Israel with him.

A great assembly. We're not talking hundreds here. We're talking thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people having gathered together, because the day had arrived when Solomon's temple had finally, once and for all, been put together and built with great care and precision and cost.

There was no expense was spared, as we've already seen, all because it's not that Solomon is saying to Israel, the more you spend, the more likely you are to be forgiven.

That's not the way it works at all. God is not saying, the more you do for me, the more I'm going to do for you. Let's make a bargain. That's not the way God works. But what Solomon is saying to Israel is God is so awesome, so precious, so majestic, so wonderful, so transcendent, so splendid, and magnificent.

[8 : 52] That was what God was to him, that there was nothing that he wouldn't have done for the Lord, and he wanted Israel to join him. And it appears that all Israel were of the same mind, because at that particular time anyway, they all seemed to want to worship God, in all his glory, and all his goodness, and in all his, and they came to worship, in terms of what God had provided, because they knew that they were able to worship him.

God was central to the life of Solomon, and he was a tremendous role model. Everyone looks up to Solomon. You know what a role model is, isn't it? It's someone who lives in such a way, particularly for young people, that young people model their lives, as they look on that person.

That's why as older Christians, we have to be so careful, when we are living in the same house, or in the same church, or Sunday school teachers, or youth club leaders, or whatever we do, or even just talking to young people, that they're looking for us, looking to us, and the people of Israel looked to Solomon, as a person who would lead them, and guide them in their worship of God, and Solomon insisted, absolutely insisted, that when it came to ruling over the people of Israel, God came first, and what he wanted more than anything else, in actual fact, a very real sense in which, he didn't want the attention.

We talk about Solomon in all his splendor, and he was. He was an utterly splendid king. There was nobody like him. Even the Lord admits that.

Solomon in all his glory, said Jesus. And yet, there's a very real sense, in which Solomon's, wanted to deflect that glory, and to give it all to the Lord.

[10 : 41] That's what he wanted. He said, you remember how much we costed the temple at? 50 billion pounds, plus everything else, that went together, to make it the most magnificent, expensive building, in all the world.

And yet, everything was devoted, to the Lord. And here was a, here is a living example, of Jesus' command, seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things, shall be added to you.

Here's a man, that wants to put God first, in his life. He's not running away from God, he's not seeing how many years, he can spend of his life, rebelling, and fighting out against God.

He doesn't want to do that, because, he says, well, why should I? I love the Lord. And, the real life, that's worth living, is life, that's devoted, and committed to the Lord.

And it's the same message tonight. The real life, if you want to know real life, life, in all its fullness, that's what Jesus said. He said, I have come to give you life.

[11 : 47] Not life in its dullness, but life in all its fullness, and all its joy. That doesn't mean that, there won't be times in your life, as a Christian, when things won't go wrong. Of course, things go wrong, in the Christian's life, like they do at every other time.

And yet, we have a promise, if you are in Christ, if you belong to Jesus, if you follow God, if you have him, like Solomon did, as the central, in the central place, in your life, you are able to say, that if God is for us, who can be against us, and just, and even though, we don't know what, what's in front of, any one of us, you know, that God, is in personal relationship, with you.

And that was true, for Solomon. That meant the world to him. You know, it's quite interesting, how the ark, here we read, about in the first part, of chapter 8, how the first thing, that Solomon did, was that he took the ark, and from the place, where David had put it, in Gibeon, and he had taken it, from the tabernacle, from where it stood there, and he, in procession, he had marched the ark, very carefully, and precisely, with everyone looking, at what was happening, and they made sacrifices, thousands of sacrifices, along the way, and they came with great joy, to locate, the ark of the covenant.

Now the ark of the covenant, we've said this before, it symbolized, the presence of God, didn't it just symbolize, it was the place, where God, dwelt.

We said, remember how we said, that God chose, to dwell, in this particular location, upon the ark, of the covenant, of God. Remember how we, how we, we described it, as a box, a golden box, with the cover, the golden cover, called the mercy seat, with the angels, and their wings, outstretched.

[13 : 37] And this was the throne of God, the place where God, had, now, here's the point, the first king of Israel, was Saul, you know that. As far as Saul, was concerned, his great mistake, going back to the very beginning, was, that he neglected, the ark of the covenant.

Now that's, that exposed, the kind of person, that Saul was. Even although he was, a strong, and a powerful, and a gifted man, he, he, he neglected, to put God first.

He chose, to leave the ark of the covenant, in a house of a man, called Obed-Edom. It wasn't the central place, in his reign. He chose to reign, in his own strength.

When David, replaced Saul, the very first thing, that he did was, he commanded, that the ark, be taken from this house, where Saul had left it, and neglected it, and brought it, up and to, to Jerusalem, where he was going.

In other words, David wanted, the presence, and the power, of God. And that, exposed the character, of David. And the contrast, there was between, the character of David, and the character of Saul.

[14 : 44] Now which one are you? Are you the kind of person, that just couldn't care less, about, as content to have God, as long as God, is at an arm's length?

You know, it's quite strange, how people, they treat God, like a lucky charm, that they can call upon God, at any time, when things go wrong, when sickness comes in, or when things go wrong, you have an accident, or you hear about somebody, and you want to pray for them, and all of a sudden, you're quite glad, that God is there.

You never give him, the time of day, from one day, to the next one. Things are going well, for you, it's as if he doesn't exist. What kind of honor, is that to God?

How dishonoring, is that to God? I'm sure, that there are very few people, in here tonight, and who, are, who don't believe in God. Maybe there are one, or two of you, who are atheists, and you don't believe in God, and you're here just tonight, to maybe, make sure that you're right, but there are, it's far more likely, that you believe in God, but you're not really, that keen, on having the Lord, at the central place.

God insists, on being the central place. Not, not only so, but if you really, want to, to, to know what life is, in all its fullness, that's what Jesus said, then take, the Lord, and give him, and this is what, this chapter is all about.

[16 : 10] It's about what God, meant to Solomon, and here is Solomon, having done everything, having built his temple, and now wishes to, to, to carry out, that final act, in which, the temple, is dedicated, is committed, and consecrated, to, the Lord.

I want us to just, in the next, in the final 10 minutes or so, ask just two very basic questions, about this chapter. First of all, what does it tell us, about, God?

What does this chapter, tell me, about, God? And then, what does it tell me, about, about prayer? Because, here is not only, a, a chapter, that tells us about God, but it's also a chapter, that, in which Solomon, he approaches God, in prayer.

First of all, what does it tell us, tell us about God? Well, it tells us, first of all, in verse 12, the Lord has said, that he would dwell, in thick darkness, and I have indeed, built you an exalted house, a place for you, to dwell in, forever.

Ever. What comes across, in this chapter, is the transcendence, and the majesty, and the awesomeness, of God. And David, Saul, of course, is quite right, to say, in verse 27, but will God, indeed, dwell on the earth?

[17 : 33] That's a profound question, isn't it? It's one of the most, profound questions, in the Bible, because, when you think about it, if God truly has created, everything that has been created, in all its vastness, and when you think of all the light, the millions of light years, that there is between one star, and another, in the universe, in the universe, we cannot comprehend, the vastness, and the complexity, and the enormity, of the universe, then God has to be bigger, than that.

No, we can't understand that. And so, well may Solomon ask, will God, indeed, dwell on the earth? We cannot understand, the earth, when you think about it, is a tiny, tiny, minuscule, spot, a dot, when it comes to creation.

And yet, this great, unimaginable God, has chosen, not only to dwell, in a particular way, on that little spot, but on that little spot, on the spot, in Jerusalem, in the temple, in that house, that Solomon has made.

It's an incredibly, profound question, isn't it? Will God, indeed, dwell on the earth? Why is he asking that question? Because he says, behold, heaven, and the highest heaven, cannot contain you.

And that's true. How much less, this house, that I have built. So it tells us, of the transcendence, and the majesty, and the awesomeness, and the greatness, and the infinity, of God.

[19 : 11] But it also tells us, that that same Lord, one living, and true God, has chosen, men, and women, as the, the, the crown, of his creation.

Bearing the image, of God, to dwell, to, to relate to them, and to converse with them, to look after them, and to take an interest in them.

Why? What is man, says the psalmist, that you are mindful, of him? And that's the truth, that men, and women, and boys, and girls, have a particular, been created, with that capacity, to know, that there is a God.

I don't believe, there's one single, one of us this evening, who doesn't know, in their heart of hearts, that there is a God. It doesn't matter, what the arguments are. It doesn't matter, what anniversary there is, of Darwin's, Darwin's birth, or his work, or whatever it is, and all, with all the beauty, of creation, and all the theory, that humankind, has come up with, as an alternative.

And it is, an alternative. Darwinism, the theory of evolution, is an alternative, to, there being a God. I know some people, try to marry the two of them together, but you talk to people, who really believe, in Darwinism.

[20 : 31] What they're really saying, is this, that God did not, create the heavens, and the earth, therefore, there is no God. That's logical, isn't it?

If there is no God, you think about it, for a few moments time. You know, people don't think enough. They don't reason, the whole thing out. If there is no God, then, then anything goes.

We are all we are, are a bunch of, randomly put together, we're not even put together, we happen to just, fall together, by a process, of random events, that have just taken place, and through billions, and billions of years, in existence, and there's no meaning, and no purpose, and, everything is meaningless.

It's just, totally, meaningless. One atom, is the same as another, whether it's an atom, in your brain, or an atom, in the wood, in which you sit, it's all the same. Everything is, has the same worth, which is no worth at all.

If all it is, is just a, a collection of molecules, then what meaning, does, do words have? What meaning, does, concern have?

[21 : 42] Or, tolerance, the great word, tolerance, in today's world. What meaning, does, love have? What meaning, does anything have? It has nothing, whatsoever.

It's just, empty. There's nothing there, if there's no God. So, it always amuses, it doesn't amuse me, it really distresses me, when I hear people, using the brain, that God has given them, to try and disprove, the existence, of God.

And one day, the Bible tells us, we will have to give an account, and then, it's when we're faced with God, you know, it's, it's, it's really, there's, there's a picture here, in this chapter, which is, which is so, quite shocking, because it almost gives, it, it, it gives you an idea, of, of what's going to happen, one day.

You notice, for example, what happened, when, when the chapter opens, with Solomon bringing, the, the Ark of the Covenant, from where David had it, all the way up to Jerusalem, placing it in his place, and then, it was down to the priests, of course, the priests were the only ones, that were allowed, to minister before the Ark, and to bring sacrifices in, and there they were, doing the job, that they had always done, that they had been trained to do, and to them, it was a daily routine, they had to be very careful, they did it in faith, believing that the Lord, that they served the Lord, and that the Lord was invisible, and everything, and there they were, doing the same job, that they had done, from day to day, and verse 10, and when the priests, came out of the holy place, all of a sudden, something happened, that they never, in their wildest expectations, expected, all of a sudden, to their horror, I believe, to their utter astonishment, God appeared, in the cloud, so that the priest, in verse 11, so the priest, could not stand, to minister, because of the cloud, they didn't expect this, sadly, it's probably the last thing, that they expected, because whilst, what they did, was in faith, they never, in their wildest expectations, believed, that the Lord, would actually choose, to appear before them,

I can tell you, when God, manifests himself, in such a way, there are no atheists, and the day is coming, when, the Bible tells us, that when, when every one of us, stands before, the judgment seat of God, that'll be it, whatever scientific theory, you won't be able to say, to the Lord, well I worked it all out, and I came to the conclusion, that you weren't there, well that'll be a bit, helpless, won't it, when you're standing, in front of the glory of God, the Bible says, you're a fool, you're a fool, because it tells us, there isn't one single person, that doesn't know, in his heart of hearts, that God is, that God is, and so to me, Solomon, is absolutely right, he doesn't try, and run from God, he doesn't try, and rebel against God, sadly he does this, later on, we'll see this, and when we come to it, sadly in later life, for whatever reason, he began to slip, and lose his bearings, and his moorings, away from God, but at that time, here is a man, who is utterly dedicated, to God, and for whom, there are no half measures, in Solomon, here's an example, of someone, who comes, heart and soul, and I want to say tonight, that that's what God, asks us to do, to come heart and soul, don't give God, half your life, because he won't accept it, he, if anyone comes after me, says Jesus, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me, because it's only when, we give the Lord, everything, everything, that you'll discover, what it is, to be a Christian, to be, to be a child of God, a man, or a woman, who is, you see the easiest thing, in the world, would be for me, today to say, well give him this, but don't give him that, here's what you give, the Lord, and here's what you don't, here's how you, you apportion your life, you give him this percentage, you don't give him that percentage, not so with Solomon,

[26 : 21] Solomon is such an example, of someone, who, for whom, God was everything, and so that he, and all his house, his household, his goods, his clothes, his throne, his gold, his silver, his chariots, everything, everything, was oriented, towards, the Lord, and that's what Jesus, asks you to do tonight, to come to him, with what you have, and who you are, and to come to him, and to commit, your whole life, in its entirety, to him, just one more thing, I want to say tonight, because I'm going to bring it, to a close, how is God approached, this chapter tells us, how God may be approached, Solomon asked the question, will God indeed, dwell on the earth, we said that, that was the most profound question, behold heaven, and the highest heaven, cannot contain you, and we've seen also, that God not only, chooses to live, in this tiny spot, in the tiny spot, in creation, the creation that he has made, in all this vastness, but he also, has made it possible, for you and I, to know him, personally, here we have this man, despite the fact, that he's a king, he's only flesh and blood, he's only one weak, human being, save us you and I tonight, and he's standing here, and he's entering, into personal conversation, with this great, awesome God, and he's doing it, in the full knowledge, that God is hearing, every word he says, he's doing also, in the full knowledge, that God is accepting, every word he says, because there is, there is a, a relationship, in which he knows, that he can come to God, and in which he knows, that God, despite the fact, that Solomon, has sinned, and done many, many wrong things, in his life, that God has forgiven him, and what we come to, once again, is the fact, that the only way, to approach God, is the way, that Solomon did, and that is, by sacrifice, do you notice, the number of times, that sacrifices, are mentioned here, when he's bringing the ark, from where it was, up to the, up to the, to Jerusalem, he's, he does it, by way of sacrifice, and sacrificing, so many sheep and oxen, that they could not be counted, or numbered, now, let me say again, that is not because, he believes, that there's more chance, of God listening to him, or forgiving him, the more sacrifices he makes, that's not the way it works, but what he's saying is, he's saying,

I want everyone to know, how God, can be approached, and that God, has said himself, that he can be approached, on the basis of the sacrifice, at the end of the chapter, we find exactly the same thing, then the king, with all Israel with him, offered sacrifice, before the Lord, Solomon offered us, peace offerings to the Lord, 22,000 oxen, and 122,000 sheep, once again, it's not because, he believes he's saved, because of his works, or because of the number, of sacrifices he makes, it's because God, has said this, that without, the shedding of blood, there is, no forgiveness, but what that means is, that with the shedding of blood, there is forgiveness, that's a promise, God has promised us, that there is a way, to himself, in which we can be reconciled, and what is that way, the way is the same, sacrifice, sacrifice, not the sacrifice, of oxen, and sheep, and goats, but the sacrifice, the one, true, only sacrifice, that all of these, other sacrifices, were pointing to, in the process, in the fullness of time, the sacrifice, of Jesus Christ, when he came into the world, and laid down his life, that's the lamb of God, that takes away, the sin, of the world, and the truth is, tonight, the wonderful message, of the gospel is this, that like Solomon, was able to approach, the Lord, with all, that confidence, so are we, on the basis, of what Jesus Christ, has done, and if you come to him, in faith, believing, in Jesus, and in what he has done, for sinners, like ourselves, in opening up the way, to God, through his death, on the cross, as our high priest, and as our sacrifice, we too, can come to God, and we can know him, as our king, as our Lord, as our leader, as our master, as our friend,

Jesus said, I have called you friends, as our constant, companion on the way, as the one we worship, and bow down to, and the one, who will one day, as we were thinking, this morning, in the Gaelic, who will come again, and raise his people, to go to be, with himself, so that, so that, death, which is the last enemy, has no hold, upon us, anymore, now I can, let me ask you this, you, who have got, your life, in front of you, now let, we'll be very careful, how you listen to that, I said, you've got your life, in front of you, you think, I'm talking to young people, I'm not talking to young people, at all, I'm talking to all of us, all of us, have got, our lives, in front of us, but I didn't say, how long that life, was going to be, when you say, you've got your life, in front of you, automatically assume, 30, 40, 50 years, not so, we don't know, none of us knows, it might be, another hour, but what I'm going to say, is this, however long it is, we don't know, it's not in our hands, whose life, is it going to be, is it going to be yours, to try and make off, what you want, to try and get out of, what you want, from life, and try and suck out of it, as much pleasure, and as much peace, as you possibly can, in which case, you die, a Christless death, or, is that life, going to be God's, and here tonight, is a man, who is, coming to the Lord, and he is, dedicating, committing, consecrating, all that he is, to the Lord, and he's saying, take my life, and let it be, consecrated,

Lord, to thee, that's the only way to live, it's the only way to live, it's the only sure way to live, as God's son, as God's daughter, as someone who loves, and honors, and fears, and reveres, and worships, the Lord, and lives, for him, like Solomon, let's pray, Father in heaven, we pray, that you will bless your word, to us again, this evening, we thank you for the way, in which even an obscure passage, like this, leads us to the cross, and leads us, to the only way, that's worth living, to commit ourselves, to Jesus Christ, and Lord, for our lives, to belong to him, Lord, we pray, that you will speak, to each one of us, this evening, in Jesus name,

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.