

Rebuilding the Temple

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[0 : 00] So when everything falls apart, how do you put it back together?

There is one of my favorite movies is this 2009 Coen Brothers film called A Serious Man. And in it, the whole movie is about this one guy's life falling apart.

It's so horrible, it's almost comedic. It's sort of a dark comedy. And his life is just falling apart over and over and over in all these different ways.

And one of the themes of the movie, as far as I can tell, comes up on the lips of a rabbi towards the end. And quoting this song from the 60s, he says, When the truth is found to be lies and all the joy within you dies, what then?

When your life falls apart, when your society falls apart, how do you put it back together? That, I think, is the question that the Jewish people are confronted with at this point in their history that we're looking at this morning.

[1 : 27] If you recall from previous weeks, the Jews were sent into exile in Babylon because of persistent faithlessness in ignoring God's warnings.

God had said to them by Jeremiah, I have on the handout, So the whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years.

Then after 70 years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste.

So the first Jewish exiles are taken into Babylon in 605 BC. And then about 70 years later, in 539, God is faithful to his promise.

And as we read in the beginning of Ezra, the Jewish people are allowed to go back home. So if we can turn to Ezra 1, which is on page 389 of the Church Bible, if you have that.

[3 : 02] And I'll read the whole chapter, it's pretty short. For most of the chapter. In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing.

Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia. The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel.

He is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor in whatever place he sojourns be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

[4 : 11] And the chapter continues to describe just an incredible amount of silver and gold and all these provisions to rebuild the temple.

So even after Jerusalem is completely destroyed, their corporate life, their society, falls apart, God is true to his promise.

And you'll notice Persia is mentioned here. Persia comes in in 539 and smashes up Babylon, the big bully on the block in the ancient Near East.

Just like God had promised by Jeremiah. And because Persia's foreign policy doesn't involve relocating conquered people, like Babylon's did, Judah's free to return home.

And the first thing that we're told that they want to rebuild, you know, you're going back home to a completely destroyed city, Jerusalem. What's the first thing you rebuild? You might think, let's rebuild some walls so that we can have some protection.

[5 : 21] Uh, because, I mean, we got destroyed last time. Let's build some protection around us. Uh, and if you know the book of Nehemiah, they do rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but not until much later.

The first thing that Judah rebuilds, or decides to rebuild, is the temple. Uh, which might seem sort of senseless. Um, humanly speaking.

So why might that be? Why might the temple be the first thing they want to rebuild? Uh, well, the temple is the very dwelling place of God. Um, we can, we can think back to when the temple was first built in, in second, in second Chronicles.

Um, uh, I have on the handout. As soon as Solomon finished his prayer of dedication of the temple, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down, and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshipped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

[6 : 37] Uh, so if Judah's exile from the land, um, into Babylon, uh, and the first temple's destruction, um, represent a period of punishment, of alienation from God, uh, then to rebuild the temple, uh, is, is to reconcile with God.

It's to say, God is going to dwell with us again. Uh, we were taken away from the land, uh, where, where God has promised to set his name, to dwell there, uh, but now he's bringing us back, uh, the punishment's over, the alienation's over, now let's rebuild this temple to, to signify that, to say, God is, is with us once again, um, in, in person, dwelling in the temple.

But before long, the, the building project ceases. Um, as significant as this temple is, uh, Judah doesn't spend very much time at the beginning, uh, uh, rebuilding it.

The, the, the initial zeal, uh, dissipates. And, uh, you know, around 20 years later, they've still barely started on it. Um, um, um, and most of that story comes up in the book of Haggai, um, which is a, uh, who's a prophet that, um, God brings to speak to, uh, Jerusalem to, to sort of stir them up to actually rebuild this thing.

Um, so let's, we'll spend most of the, the rest of our time in Haggai, uh, which is on page 791 in the, in the Pew Bible. Um, it's one of the last books in the Old Testament.

[8 : 31] And it's real short, so you might turn past it real easily. Okay. And as we look at Haggai, we can see why the Jewish people stopped building the temple, even though building it would signify reconciliation with God.

Uh, we'll see how God encourages them to rebuild, uh, and, and we'll see, uh, God comforting his people, um, when the temple pales in comparison to what was before.

When, when their rebuilt lives, uh, are still, uh, nothing like they were before. Um, so let's, so let's read from Haggai chapter 1.

In the second year of Darius, the king, uh, king of Persia, that is, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet, to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, these people say that the time has not yet come to rebuild the temple of the Lord. Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet.

[10 : 04] Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.

You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm, and he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it, that I may be glorified, says the Lord. You look for much, and behold, it came to little, and when you brought it home, I blew it away.

Why, declares the Lord of hosts, because my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. Therefore, the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.

And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.

[11 : 16] So, why does the building project on the temple, the dwelling place of God, stop? Well, God is accusing them of a selfish fixation on their own houses.

Judah spends their energy building nice, paneled houses. I'm not exactly sure what paneled means, but it sounds like really nice houses. million dollar homes for themselves instead of building the temple.

God's house. And then the construction of the temple is presented as a necessary precursor to their prosperity in the land.

God's saying here, because you've done this and you've been focusing on your own material prosperity instead of building the house like I told you to do, representing a restoration and reconciliation with me, therefore, I've actually withheld material prosperity from you.

You've been working towards your own prosperity, but I've been keeping it from you, God says. So, what about when God's assessment in verse 6?

[12 : 42] Right? You've sown much, harvested little, you eat, but you never have enough, you drink, but you never have your fill, you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. What about when that seems to apply to us?

When we sow much and harvest little, so to speak? What about when it seems like we are materially, emotionally, spiritually stuck? Now, certainly not all human suffering, material, emotional, spiritual, is a result of foolishness or faithlessness on our part.

For Judah here, it's a result of their own faithlessness and fixation on themselves. But that's not generally the case. It's not always the case.

but it is sometimes the case that if we find ourselves stuck, it's actually our own fault. We can think in the book of Proverbs, this pervades the whole book of Proverbs.

I just picked out one verse. The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied. It's possible that if we find ourselves stuck, it's because we're actually not doing what we ought to be doing.

[14 : 08] Or if we find ourselves emotionally or spiritually distant from God, sometimes, though certainly not always, sometimes it's a result of our own faithlessness or sin.

I think on Isaiah 59, behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, or is eared dull that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

So God's word to Judah here, I think, is a word to us as well, to consider our ways. If our material or spiritual condition isn't what we would hope it would be, if we find ourselves stuck, and we can see that this isn't just a result of the world being broken and fallen, this isn't a result of me being sinned against, but actually I can see how my own decisions have led me to this place of being stuck.

Well, let's consider what concrete changes we can make to get ourselves unstuck. Again, this isn't always going to be the case. The book of Job is something that we need to put next to things like the soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.

We need to put Job alongside that. Job is a truly innocent suffering victim. That's what the whole book is about. But sometimes, if we're honest with ourselves, we are not just truly innocent suffering victims when we find ourselves stuck.

[15 : 51] Sometimes we're more like Judah at the beginning of the book of Haggai, and our problems are our own fault. And we can make small, concrete steps to get ourselves unstuck.

So let's consider our ways if that applies to us. But before we move on to the rest of Haggai, any thoughts or questions so far?

I was thinking about this, God says, you're building your own houses and you should be building my house.

But what I thought about was in the days of David, when David determines to build a house for the Lord, God says, did I ever ask you for a house? Like, I've been intense.

Like, he sounds very, you know, like, I've been fine, but it's a good idea, you know, and your son will do it. But he's not demanding, he doesn't in those days demand a house.

[16 : 58] And so what's happening here that's different, that's sort of what I've been thinking about. And just, and I was also struck, I just read this recently, going through this section in my reading, and how central the worship is, like you said in the beginning, like, this is the whole purpose of them coming back.

So I don't know, I was just thinking about those things, like, what's the difference, and I think maybe it's, you know, I'm just sort of thinking on lap, but that this was symbolic of reconnecting with God in a way that was not necessary in the days of David because he did have a tabernacle that they were worshiping about.

So I don't know. Yeah. just interesting, and I guess to say that God isn't about building this house in this day for, not that God can have selfish reasons, but it's not about like a pride like we would have, like, hey, you've got to build my house, you know, that kind of thing.

It's about desiring that they reconnect in worship and desiring to bless them. Yeah. rather than, you know, the pagan gods demanding him.

Yeah. That's a good word. Yeah. That's a really great observation, thinking back to David, because it's not as though God needs a house to live in, you know, you and I.

[18 : 33] It's good for us to have roofs over our heads, but God doesn't actually live in a house. Yeah. So it's not as though God needs the Jewish people to rebuild this house.

But they need it. Yeah. Because this is reconnecting and reconciling with God to rebuild this house.

Yeah. Yeah. That's a good word. anything else before we move on?

Cool. Okay. So Judah heeds God's words by Haggai and builds the temple.

But it's clear immediately that this temple pales in comparison to the original one. If we were to go back it's long passages so we're not reading them this morning.

[19 : 41] But if we go back to 1 Kings and we look at the description of the incredible wealth in Solomon's time. Solomon who built the first temple. We look at the descriptions of the first temple.

We can start to get this idea that the first temple everything was gold. it was this magnificent building. And it's clear early on that this second temple, that this rebuilt temple pales in comparison.

That it's nothing compared to it. Zechariah, another prophet from this same time, calls this the day of small things. When God's people seemed small and insignificant, when their society seemed completely in shambles, compared to what they once had.

Even though they came back into the land, it's not a complete full restoration, but it pales in comparison to what it once was. It's the day of small things, as Zechariah calls it. And we see this passage in Ezra, when the foundation of the temple is laid.

It's full of pathos. And I've put on the handout, and all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

[21 : 03] But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping.

Rebuilding this temple is a bittersweet moment, because on the one hand, it is a reconciliation with God, symbolic of that. But on the other hand, it's a reminder of everything they had lost, because of their own sin for decades earlier.

But then God comforts his people about this day of small things, in Haggai chapter 2. So let's begin reading in Haggai 2.

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, who was left among you who saw this house in its former glory?

How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? Yet, now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord.

[22 : 29] Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt.

My spirit remains in your midst. Fear not, for thus says the Lord of hosts. Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place, I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.

It's as if the author really wants you to know that the Lord of hosts is declaring this, says it over and over. Now, this passage we just read starts out simple enough, be strong, fear not.

Then it goes, what's going on? I'll shake all the nations, treasures will come in. So what is this word of comfort? First, God acknowledges that the temple is nothing compared to what it once was.

[23 : 59] He acknowledges the people's anxiety about that, their grief over what they lost.

first. But then God promises his presence. Even though this new temple is nothing compared to what it once was, nevertheless, God is present with them in it.

Fear not, I am with you. And then God promises to make this new temple even more glorious than the first one that Solomon built. God promises to shake up all the other pagan nations so that all of their treasures will come in and make that temple even more glorious than the first one.

Solomon's temple was full of gold, this one's going to have even more gold. And therefore God directs his people to keep working, to keep building the temple. But then the latter glory of this house, what does that really mean, that the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former?

Judah's discouraged that the current state of the house of the Lord, the temple, isn't very glorious at all. And God promises that the future will be better. And on one level we could just say, well, it'll be better because the treasures of all the other nations will come in and fill it.

[25 : 31] But then if we look back on this text, on this side of the cross and the resurrection, we can think in the Gospel of John, Jesus himself presents himself as the new temple, the place where God's glorious presence dwells.

So Jesus himself is presented as the more glorious future of the temple. At the beginning of John's Gospel we read, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory.

Glory as of the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth. The latter glory of this temple will be greater than the former. And we have seen his glory.

A little later Jesus says in Jerusalem in John's Gospel, destroy this temple and three days I'll raise it up. the Jews then said, because throughout John's Gospel a consistent theme is Jesus says Jesus stuff and nobody gets it.

The Jews say, well it's taken 46 years to build this temple and you'll raise it up in three days? But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Jesus' own body, Jesus' own person, is this more glorious future of the temple.

[26 : 54] even though if you look at him, he's not much to look at. If we met him, our first reaction would probably be that he smells, because everyone in the ancient world smelled.

But the kind of glory is different. Jesus is glorious even though he's not covered in gold. But then later after Jesus ascended into heaven, we're told that the church, the community of God's people, is the new temple.

In Ephesians, Paul writes, through Jesus, we both, Jews and Gentiles, have access in one spirit to the Father. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone and whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple of the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the spirit. God's people is this dwelling place for God by the spirit.

The new temple, so to speak. Peter writes, as you come to Jesus, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[28 : 42] Peter mixes up his metaphors here. Are we a building? Are we the temple? Or are we the priesthood? And for him it's both. But we can see here Peter also presents the church, God's people, as this new building for God to dwell in, this new temple, this new spiritual house, even more glorious than Solomon's temple, even though it's covered in gold and the glory of God filled it, like we were reading in 2 Chronicles.

and if you've put your faith in Christ, you yourself, even individually, you yourself are a new temple, more glorious than Solomon's, in whom God's spirit dwells, and whose future is unimaginably glorious.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? Now, if you look at 1 Corinthians 6, he takes that truth and uses it to rebuke the Corinthians for their sin.

But he does say here that your very own body is a temple of God, that God, the eternal God, creator of the universe, dwells in you if you have put your faith in Jesus.

This is stunning, and I'm not sure that I personally think about this and try to grapple with this stunning reality enough. It's unthinkable, really.

[30 : 22] And then our future, if we belong to Jesus, is unimaginably glorious. Paul writes in Philippians, our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body, lowly body, to be like his glorious body, the risen body of Jesus, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former. God says that to the Jews many centuries ago, when they built that second temple, when they rebuilt the temple, and it looked like nothing.

And God says it to us. The future glory of the church will be far more incredible than what it looks like now, because sometimes it might not be much to look at.

And each of us personally, if we belong to Christ, our future is unimaginably glorious. We will be, we will share in the glory of the risen Jesus.

Words fail to really get it, how incredible that is. You know, the risen Jesus that when John sees him at the beginning of the book of Revelation, he falls on his face as though dead.

[31 : 58] You know, that's how glorious he is. We're going to share in that. we can have hope for when things look like they're falling apart. We can say, well, that's our future.

We're going to be like him. But how do we get there? So, God's word to Judah here in Haggai permits neither self-reliance nor complacency.

self-reliance is excluded. God says, I will fill this house with glory. God is the one to fill it with glory.

If we attempt to move forward from our day of small things through self-reliance and self-help, we're going about it the wrong way.

We don't fill the house with glory. Judah doesn't fill the house with glory. God does. But at the same time, God tells his people to work.

[33 : 06] Verse 4 in Haggai 2. Work for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts. God doesn't want us to be totally complacent.

God doesn't want Judah to be totally complacent. work for God. The very reason that they're able to work on building that temple confidently is because God is with them.

God being with them, God promising to fill it with glory doesn't mean they can be complacent and not worry about it, but it inspires them, encourages them to actually go forward and keep working.

And Paul has a similar principle in the New Testament when he says in Philippians, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

So I want to spend the rest of our time thinking a little bit more about our own days of small things. But before we go there, are there any thoughts and questions at this point?

[34 : 26] So I think one of the things we're up against, and I think the exhortation from the passage is so powerful because God says, I am with you.

Go forth and go out and do these things. I am with you because it doesn't feel like he's with his people all the time. In the sense that there's an analogy or there's a connection I was thinking about as you were teaching where the folks that came back to the lesser temple, some of them remembered how visibly better and more powerful it all seemed back in the day.

But now the world is able to just turn back and go, oh yeah, you're the conquered people, now you're building a little shack. Have fun with your shack. And if we think about us and our situation, I think about the early church and how to establish the early church, people are doing miracles everywhere.

People are, you know, Jesus' servants are going and being like, you don't believe us? Watch this. You're healed. You're basically doing amazing signs and wonders so that people couldn't ignore it.

They said, well, you must be from God because look at all this amazing stuff that couldn't be ignored. Whereas sometimes, I'll just say I personally feel like we're in a position of weakness humanly speaking.

[35 : 57] Like we're not able to go out, most of us are not able to go out on the street and say, oh, you don't want to listen to me? Watch this. I'm going to make this tree burst into flames and then I'm going to make it stop automatic.

Yeah, like Elijah calling down fire. It's such a good word because we do need to be reminded that even though it might not seem like it, God's with us, he's with his church, things are not now how they're always going to be.

There is coming a shaking still, right? Obviously a huge shaking of what is reality to most people. people. And so I just wanted to sort of make that connection on my own or verbalize that connection I made because I feel weak a lot of times and I need that encouragement.

Yeah. It's not just the Jewish people who are in the day of small things when they can look back and think, what about those former times?

Those earlier times when things were, when God's people were more faithful, when God seemed to be working more, we can find ourselves thinking the same way.

[37 : 18] Yeah. Yeah. But then God's, yeah, God's word to Haggai, therefore, is God's word to us too.

Fear not, I'm with you, even when it doesn't seem like it. And actually, that ties into the next section in the handout.

Like, do you, are you uneasy about a rapidly changing world? I have a professor at the seminary who talks about this all the time.

Every time he prays before class, he says something about the world changing faster than we can keep up. As a 26-year-old boy, it's hard for me to really realize that.

But the world's very different than it was a few years ago, a few decades ago. Do you wistfully look back on an earlier time when the church was perhaps more faithful or more culturally significant?

[38 : 28] Do you look back on the early church, reading the book of Acts? People would touch cloths up to Paul's skin and then put it on a person in need of healing and then they're healed.

I was just reading Acts 19 when that happens. My goodness, that doesn't happen. I don't see that. Do we look back on that and think, what's going on now?

Well, by faith we say that the most glorious time for the church in the world is not behind us, but in front of us. That the latter glory of this house, the latter glory of this world will be greater than the former.

God is more. When Christ comes again in glory to restore all things, the church will be more glorious than she ever was.

The world will be more glorious than it ever was. And by faith we can hope in that. We can be comforted by that just as God is comforting the people of Judah by Haggai.

[39 : 45] Is your material or financial situation difficult? I mean, that's how Haggai begins. They sow much and gather little.

And of course, as a conquered people, Judah is not as prosperous as it once was at this point in their history. They've been conquered and they're going back with what little they can to rebuild a broken society.

So is your material or financial situation difficult and are you perhaps made to feel small and insignificant because of that? Well, God says to you, just as God says to Judah and Haggai, that you are incredibly precious to him.

So precious that he gave his own son for you. And if you put your faith in, if you've put your faith in Jesus, God's glorious presence lives in you, you are the temple along with the whole church.

And there will be a day when it will be clear to everyone just how precious you are. So if you are made to feel small and insignificant, well, in God's eyes, you're not.

[41 : 05] in fact, you are unimaginably precious, Dan. Or, I think of Psalm 42 in connection with this.

Can you remember a time when perhaps you enjoyed God and rejoiced in his love, but now find yourself discouraged that prayer is harder than it once was?

Reading the Bible is an arduous task. God seems distant and cold. His promises to you are they just, in one ear out the other, doesn't move your heart.

Well, is that your day of small things? You can look back on an earlier time perhaps when you were newer in the faith, when you had just come to her here and believe the gospel.

And now it feels very different. Well, if you persist in faith in Christ, he is present with you even when it doesn't feel like it.

[42 : 15] This new temple that Judah is building looks nothing like the first one, but God is still with them. And there will be a day when you'll never need to question God's presence, glorious presence with you anymore.

when it will be clear, when the veil will be taken away, and the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

That is your future. And so we can say with Psalm 42, why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation, and my God. Paul writes in Romans 8, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The latter glory of this house and of this world and of our lives will be far greater than any former glory. If life disappoints us, if we don't end up where we thought we might be, we can be confident in our day of small things, so to speak, that our future in Christ is incomparably glorious, not worth comparing, regardless of how things look right now.

[43 : 42] That can be our hope in the day of small things, just as it was for the people of Judah in this time, when they're rebuilding the temple.

when I pray, and then we have a few minutes left after that. Lord Jesus, thank you that you have sent your spirit to be with your people, that you have not left us to be alone and orphans, even if it might look and feel like that sometimes.

We know that you've promised that is not the case and that you are with us always to the end of the age. Thank you that even by the same power that with which you were raised from the dead and by which you subject all things to yourself, with that same power you will raise us up and make us glorious like yourself.

thank you that you have not left us without hope in the world, but that we can be, we can rejoice in hope for that day when you will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and your kingdom will have no end.

Amen. Amen. All right. We have probably a minute, a minute and a half. So, are there any parting thoughts, parting questions?

[45 : 31] Yes. Yeah. So, I wanted to touch back on what you said about, you know, having nostalgia about the way faith used to be and, like, maybe being discouraged about the way it is now.

I don't see it that way. I see more people who are free to be saved, more people who are willing to be saved than there were 50 years ago.

So, I do see that latter glory of the church that they're speaking about from a personal perspective. 40 years I wasn't saved and now I am.

So, obviously, from my perspective, it's getting better rather than looking back to nostalgia. You can look back on specific incidents and times, but overall I'd say these are the best of times.

Praise God. 40 years ago I wasn't alive, so it's hard for me to say. Amen.

[46 : 35] All right. it's about time, so let's put some of these chairs away and head up. Thank you.