

The Ark of the Covenant

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Date: 11 November 2018

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 00] I have, those will you please turn to 1 Kings chapter 8. 1 Kings chapter 8.

What my intention is, of course, is to read the first few verses together because there are over 60 verses here and while they could be all read out, it would be hard for us perhaps to retain anyway.

So I'm going to read up to verse 11 and then we can summarize the rest as we go. So now I hear God's word. Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers of the houses of the people of Israel before King Solomon in Jerusalem to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion.

And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon and at the feast in the month of Athan, which is the seventh month, and all of the elders of Israel came.

And the priests took up the Ark and they brought up the Ark of the Lord, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent. The priests and all the Levites brought them up.

[1 : 40] And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who had assembled before him were with him before the Ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen they could not be counted or numbered.

Then the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to its place in the inner sanctuary of the house in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.

For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the Ark, so that the cherubim overshadowed the Ark and its poles. And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place before, in the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen from the outside.

And they are there to this day. There was nothing in the Ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt.

And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud. For the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

[2 : 58] Well, it goes on for Solomon to recognize a few different things in particular, but one of the things that he does notice is that in his prayer, he gives thanks to God for a number of different things.

And then in his benediction, he's effectively recognizing that all good things come from God above, and that everything on earth is an act of God's doing.

Now, this is spelled out over 60-odd verses, 66 verses in particular, but it goes like this. The account of the covenant moving into the temple, Solomon recognizing that before God and the blessing and the curses, and then Solomon's prayer to God, which is a recognize of, we get to hear what he prays, and then finally his benediction, which is simply a conclusion to all that God has done, or at least recognizing that everything that has occurred is actually down to God through his people.

So that, there's the sort of summary, as it were, of 1 Kings 8, at least as a reading. We're going to come back to that after this next hymn.

Well, if you have God's word there, please turn again to 1 Kings 8.

[4 : 32] As you're doing that, let me remind you how structures often work, at least with wisdom and the Lord. There are always four options when dealing with the Lord rather than two options.

For instance, if we think of, in Solomon's terms of wealth and money or wealth and good living, this has to be categorized into four different areas to be understood.

It's not enough to say, as a Christian, that there are only two options. You can either be poor or you can be rich. The trouble is, with that kind of either or, it leaves out God.

And so, when you include God, there's therefore now four options rather than two options. And that is, you can be wealthy without God or you can be wealthy with God.

You can be poor without God or you could be poor with God. And that type of structure, at least the way to think things through, is incredibly important because it puts everything into order.

[5 : 44] So, in some situations, God knows that it's better for a person to be poor with him and for other people, it's good that they be wealthy because of how they might use their wealth to serve others.

Solomon might be an exception given the fact that he has a lot of wealth and yet his foolishness is what he's remembered for. But generally speaking, when you're trying to think things through as a Christian and you have to weigh these things up, we're not allowed to think in categories of either or.

It's either this or it's that. Because God knows that whenever God is involved, that adds an extra two. So, it might be better for some to have wealth with God than to have God without wealth.

Or it might be better to have no wealth and have God. But both of those, both of those are better than being poor without God or being rich without God.

Now, that may seem like a lot to follow. But when you start thinking in those ways, as wisdom causes you to think, suddenly everything finds its proper order.

[6 : 52] You're able to slot things into their right order, the right priorities. What should come first? What should come second? Which is better and for why?

And so, it may be tempting to think, well, it's better to have God and wealth and riches. Well, then to have God and not have wealth and riches. Now, from our point of view, that looks like a good one-two.

Okay, a good, we'll put this one first and have that one second. But because of the corrupting power of riches, okay, it might actually be the other way around for you. Okay, because wealth can corrupt, God's order for you might be one-two in the other way.

It's better for you to have God and remain relatively poor than to have God and be rich because of the corrupting power that can happen. And when you understand those categories and you understand the orders, you're then able to spot the potential dangers of where people can go wrong.

Solomon here is still at the pinnacle point. He's still at the high point. And it gets even better for the nation. But as I said last week, Solomon is on that tipping point.

[8 : 06] Things couldn't be any better. Things couldn't be any better for Solomon. Couldn't be any better for the nation. But at the same time, there is this inherent danger, or at least this danger within Solomon himself, because his heart is halved between God's work and God's ways and his own desires.

And that type of influence can't help but come out in your daily life. When you're half-hearted, it'll come out in everything. What this chapter explains, or at least what Solomon explains in his prayer, is the reason for blessing and non-blessing.

And we think, well, it's just random. God will give it to us if he wants to give it, or he'll withhold it if he wants to withhold it. And that's certainly true. But what if it's also true, as the New Testament would indicate, that some blessings come upon God's people conditionally?

That if they fulfill certain conditions, then God's blessing is added to them. And if those conditions are not met, even in the New Testament, those blessings are not met by God's people.

And a simple example of this would be in the book of James, when he says, Oh, by the way, Christians, you have not, because you've asked not. In other words, the verse doesn't mean the opposite of what it says.

[9 : 32] Yes, James isn't telling us, well, you would have had it anyway, whether or not you prayed. No, James is quite clear that you have not, because you asked not. In other words, the resultant answer to that prayer, or the blessing that you would have liked to have seen further down the line, was only going to happen if you offered up the prayer for that blessing in the first place.

And that's the way of, perhaps God is keeping us on our toes, perhaps he's just getting us to understand more thoroughly how he works. The point here is to remember that God is not random in his blessings.

Every blessing has a reason, and even the misery that sometimes God can send is a blessing. Now that, again, won't be felt like a blessing, okay?

But I can assure you, as we will perhaps make our way through, that those strange blessings of potential upset, of potential misery, of those type of things, are the type of blessings that can often get God's people back on track.

The classic example of this would be the younger brother who ran out of money. While he still had money in his pocket, he was walking further and further away from his father's house.

[10 : 49] But the moment the money ran out in his pocket, he then began to turn around and walk back to the father. God sometimes has to make us become sensible of our misery before he can then bring us to the conclusion that we need to turn around and go back to him.

And that is the way that God works. But here, we don't get to see any of this as such, but it's all implicit because we know how it's going to end up. And perhaps our mistake is we know how the story ends, okay?

Which is why I'm drawing out these things now. So here's the summary of 1 Kings 8. The Ark of the Covenant has moved in to the temple. And this is a big thing for the people of God.

Because now, what it symbolizes is not just God's presence amongst his people, but you have the combination of the worship of God, i.e. the temple, and the Word of God, i.e. the Ark of the Covenant.

The reason for the Word of God is because the Ten Commandments are contained within the Ark of the Covenant. This is what's spoken of the tablets given to Moses at Horeb.

[12 : 01] They're in the Ark of the Covenant. And so now you have a temple where God is to be worshipped in accordance with the Word of God that the people of God received through Moses in the Ten Commandments, and of course, were there written down.

What you don't get to notice here in 1 Kings 8, but you do get to notice over in 2 Chronicles 5, speaking of the same event, that when they hold this feast, this party, a holy party, before God of thanksgiving and of sacrificing and offering and all of that, it looks just like perhaps a one-off occasion.

But in 2 Corinthians 5, the author spells out to us, no, this lasted for a week. This is a big deal. The Ark of the Covenant moving back into the temple of God is a big deal.

One of the songs they would have sung, you can see it over in 2 Corinthians 5, is this, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever, quoting David in Psalm 136.

That's the type of songs that they would have been singing to God at this feast. So there's singing, there's dancing, there's sacrificing, there's offering to God, because they recognize just how big a deal moving the Ark of the Covenant is out of the city of David into the Holy of Holies, into the place where it's reserved.

[13 : 28] Like I said, we wouldn't have actually got to see it unless we got to read about what it was like on the inside. The Ark of the Covenant symbolizes, then, God's presence with his people, but it also symbolizes something important, and that is how God communicates with his people.

God's people are to understand that God will communicate to them through speech, through the written word. In other words, the whole of their life on earth is directed in exactly the same way the whole of our life on earth is directed, through what God says.

And this is important. But more importantly, okay, or at least additionally important, is now that we have the word of God in the temple of God, the word of God is to direct our worship of God.

That's equally important. And what that means is, is when we actually come to worship God like we do this evening, when we actually come to worship God corporately like this, which is the only way to worship God, at least in the way that God sets out in the book of Hebrews, in the New Testament, and throughout Scripture, this corporate understanding of worshiping God, that doesn't mean that your whole life isn't to be an act of worship, but there is a difference between worshiping God in all that you do, whether you eat, drink, or sleep, give glory to God.

But this corporate aspect is important because of what can only happen when you are together, i.e. praying for each other. You say, well, that can be done in the houses all by ourselves.

[15 : 05] It can be. But again, if you read the way God sets it out, it's normally done together in the church as well. The other thing that Solomon wants us to understand, which is equally important for us today as it was for them, and that is this, that what you think about God, okay, and his dealings in the past will determine how you will relate to God today and in the future.

So, Paul Copin, at least his last name is Copin, I forget what his first name is, had finished writing this book called, several years ago, Is God a Moral Monster?

And it was quite a difficult book to read, and some people fell out over this book because of some of the things that they felt Paul Copin was trying to defend God over, given some of God's acts in the Old Testament, some of which are very hard, even for mature Christians, to get their head around, and hard around when it comes to considering this.

But his point, which is a valid point, it's the same as ours, that how you think about God in the Old Testament, do you think he was right there? Do you think he was wrong there?

Do you think he was harsh on these people? Do you think his judgments were too difficult, and, you know, were too aggressive?

[16 : 29] Whatever you think about God, that frames and compels your thinking right into the future. Now I'm struggling to relate to God today because of what I've heard about God doing in the past.

Okay? And perhaps you've known people like that. You know, I don't know if I can speak, imagine meeting someone that you knew committed horrible war crimes.

Okay? You've never met them before in your life, and you've heard about what they've done, and you've read about what they've done, and you've watched videos on what they've done, and what have you, sort of modern-day technology, and suddenly you meet them.

You've never met them before. You know? And as your mum always used to say, how do you know you don't like it? You've not tried it yet. Okay? Well, you know automatically that that little quirk, how do you know you don't like it, you haven't tried, doesn't work.

And it doesn't work because you've got a pre-understanding of now meeting this person. How do you act towards them? What are your feelings towards them? Well, that's just a, I guess, a simple illustration to indicate that how we relate to the God of the Old Testament, knowing that the God of the Old Testament is the same God throughout, is how we will relate to God in the present and in the future.

[17 : 48] And Solomon understands this. This is a keen insight to Solomon. What you believe about God and what he has done in the past will condition you to such an extent that it will determine how you relate to God right now.

And what you will believe and trust in tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next day. Solomon knows this. So, knowing, getting to know God is more difficult than just speaking in terms of I have a relationship with Jesus.

Okay? It's good that we have a relationship with Jesus. But the difficulties that come with a relationship with Jesus means that we then have to wrestle with some of the things that we think, hang on God, if I were you, I would, right?

And who hasn't been there? I think we've all been there. We all stay away from certain parts of the Bible because we don't know what to do with them. They are difficult parts.

So, and that all comes from this very careful observation of how we relate to God. So, what we think about God, okay, what we know about God and what he's done will condition how we live for God today.

[19 : 08] So, the more you know, the more stable you are. The more you know, the better you are. The more you know, at least it will begin to refine your thinking and refine your heart.

You will never know anything and you will never be a person where you've run out of questions to ask God because you feel everything's okay. We're never going to get there because, as people, we have that human side that doesn't understand divine things completely.

there are two things then to notice before we get to Solomon's prayer in brief and that is Solomon is very concerned that we understand that this is a coming together of the worship of God and the law of God.

The worship of God and the law of God. So, we'll briefly speak about the worship of God. The moment the Ark of the Covenant is brought into the temple and there is this praise and thanksgiving and sacrifice.

Sacrifice, not just as a means of thanksgiving but as a means of acknowledging to God that we have sinned against you and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

[20 : 17] So, this is a statement to God that you are right, you are holy, you are always holy, you are the same God yesterday, today and forever and therefore you will always be the same God yesterday, today, and forever and given that you are unmovable and unchangeable we recognize that the problem is on our side not on your side and so when they offer up these sacrifices it's not just a means of thanksgiving but it is an acknowledgement of the difference between ourselves and God.

That's what worship is. Worship is the right response from the person who is created who is created by God to God who created them. Okay, it is the right response of the creature to the creator in all areas of life.

In other words, when you think about worship, think about it as a response. Think about how am I to approach God? Well, who is God?

What is God like? What am I to think of him? And so, suddenly, this worship of God then becomes dictated by the word of God because the word of God informs us as to who God is and that information then causes us to worship God differently than perhaps we did earlier in the day or earlier in the week or earlier in the year.

In other words, the more we know about God, the more we're able to worship him properly. The other thing to notice here is that Solomon also understands that the worship of God is not to be restricted to the temple.

[22 : 00] It's not to be restricted to this feast. It's not to be restricted to an event where you have lots of thanksgiving and that'll do for the year. Where you have lots of sacrifices and you think, right, that'll do for the year.

I can just carry on and do what I like now because I've put my church attendance in for a year. In my second charge, I had a lady come up to me and this was outside in the church grounds and I was relatively new.

I'd only been there a few weeks, maybe a couple of months and she says, oh yeah, I've been coming to this church for 14 years. And I was thinking, yeah, I know that I've only just got here but I just don't ever remember seeing you in any of the services throughout the week or at least any of the other type of ministry.

And suddenly, it came out in conversation because I just got, what she meant was is that she'd been coming to the graveyard for 14 years. But in her mind, that was her connection.

Now, why would someone make a connection like that? Why is it the case that some people back in the day thought, thought, that if I get my baby baptized, okay, and I just send them to confirmation, I send it, then that's it, job done.

[23 : 27] Why would people think that? Why would people think that if I go to the church when I'm born, which I have to be taken, okay, and I go to the church when I'm married, okay, because, right, and then I go to church when my funeral comes, why are people under the impression that God is wanting something like that?

Well, one of the things we have to realize is that if people don't know, they don't know. So they can't help but believe what they do because they don't know any, they don't know what they ought to know.

So people live their life before God always in accordance with what they know. Okay, I'm a good person. I believe God don't, will not send good people to hell.

I'm a good person and therefore they live their whole life based on the knowledge that they know about God and their level of worship stops at their level of understanding. Solomon understands that.

Solomon appreciates that situation. The worship of God is crucially important. Secondly then, the law of God.

[24 : 43] Well, here we have the Ten Commandments. You'll notice in verse 9 of chapter 8 that in the Ark of the Covenant we have, and I'll read it, there was nothing in the Ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt.

In other words, what we have here is the Ten Commandments where God is dictating or rather demonstrating to his people who he is in light of the rest of the world.

Okay? Who he is in light of the rest of the world. Let me put it a slightly different way. Imagine you grew up in a Muslim country. Okay? And you're surrounded by Muslims.

You're a whole street Muslims. Down on the left side, down on the right side. You go to the park, Muslim children. Okay? You go to the school, Muslim school. You do a number of other things.

It's all, you go to a shop and you have all the Muslim sort of laws and stipulations for food and what have you. and there you are in this situation never ever hearing about God.

[26 : 04] You have no idea. And then all of a sudden or not all of a sudden but in God's plan you get converted. You get, what is the first thing you think you need to be told upon your conversion?

Well, I think the first thing would be who is it that saved me? Who is it that's brought me out of the darkness? Who is it that's brought me out of the land of slavery, the land of bondage?

And so the reason God gave the book of Genesis to the people who came out of Egypt, remember the book of Genesis was written for people who came out of Egypt to teach them that the God of the world, the one who created all of this, is Yahweh, the same God who brought you out of Egypt.

And the Ten Commandments was a shorthand version of, or not necessarily shorthand, but were ten key points of demonstrating to the people that you don't know, you've grown up in the land of Egypt, you've been surrounded by their foreign gods, yeah, you may have heard stories as to who I am, but now let me, save for myself, who I am.

And so the reason why the Ten Commandments are so crucial to God's people is because it is God revealing his own character to his own people in a written form. That's why it's so crucial.

[27 : 25] Okay? When a person is saved, they don't know Jesus at the same level that you know him. When a person is saved, their level of maturity in Christ and in their knowledge of God is this compared to yours.

They are so far behind. They have so much ground to grow in. Right? Because when people are saved, when people are brought out of bondage and slavery and so forth and so on, they may have heard stories about God.

They may know about Jesus. They may have vague ideas. But it's only upon conversion and those scales being removed from their eyes, an act of God's mercy, are they then brought into the full revelation.

But why revelation? Well, as we've already said, that unless you know God properly, you're unable to worship God properly. Okay? Unless you know God properly, you're unable to worship God properly.

Therefore, keeping yourself from God's word is to keep yourself from worshipping God properly. That doesn't mean that you're, that doesn't mean that you're doing anything wrong.

[28 : 36] But what it means is, is your glass is half empty. Okay? The issue's not on God's side. God's revealed everything that he wants to reveal to us so that we may worship him properly.

But if we've only read 20% of it, okay, then we're 80% behind. Or, this is where the four conditions come in, or God could have given us all of his revelation and we have read all of his revelation, but then only be committed to 20% of it.

And so we're still 80% behind. So we're either 80% behind because we don't know 80%, or we're 80% behind in our worship of God properly because we've heard it all, but we're only committed 20% of the way.

And this is what Solomon understands, that the worship of God in people's lives will be shaped entirely by the amount, by the amount that they understand and respect and committed to the word of God that God has revealed to them.

In other words, God hasn't, God hasn't held anything back. In other words, the reason it's not being completed in the way that it should be cannot be laid at God's feet and so you've given me insufficient funds.

[29 : 48] You told me to go out and buy A, B, and C, but I only had enough to buy A and B. You shortchanged me. You gave me insufficient funds to be able to complete the task.

That kind of blame cannot be put at God's front door. God gives us to fulfill A, B, and C in the worship of him and so the issue is now on our side.

Okay? The issue is now on our side. God has given it in full and now we must be committed to the full. This is why it says that Christians are to hear the whole counsel of God.

that one of my duties before God is to be able to cover the whole counsel of Scripture. Okay?

That may mean reading through the whole Bible entirely. It may mean teaching on every single verse and I'm sure it does. But what it does mean is it means that the whole counsel of what God says has to be given to the church.

[30 : 50] In other words, I can't expect any of you to live a correct life before God. Okay? If I'm only giving you A and B. If I, as a pastor, give you insufficient funds, how are you going to be able to spend those funds wisely on everything that God expects you to do?

The commitment to it. So I have a responsibility to not only read God's word sufficiently so that I can worship God properly, but I also have a responsibility to make sure that I don't give you insufficient funds, insufficient counsel of God's word so that you also can live God, live God faithfully.

Okay? So the responsibility is great because God is great. Okay? The standards are high because it is God, because it's God that we are speaking about.

The issue is then that whenever there is a disconnect between me and the word of God, there is a disconnect between me and God. Whenever there is a disconnect between me and my understanding and commitment to the word of God, there then becomes a disconnect to my relationship with God.

And Solomon knows this. Solomon, in his prayer, puts all of these things together because he understands what is happening here. The worship of God and the law of God run side by side.

[32 : 16] And they are the reason for blessings and curses. They're the reasons. Jonathan Edwards put it this way. The Northampton Puritan in America years ago.

He said, I forget which book it's in, or it could be in a book of collected sermons, but he said this, that God must make man first sensible of his misery before he can bring that man around to see that he needs God.

And so Solomon, in his prayer, where he spells out the blessings and the curses, the reason why there could be famine, the reason why there is no rain, the reason why they lose in battle and they're sent off to exile, the reason why these things happen is because they have been perfectly explained in the word of God.

If you obey my laws and keep my statutes and walk in my ways, I will bless you. And if you don't, then you don't. You don't get the blessings. Solomon understands that.

Solomon knows the connection between keeping the word of God and the blessings of God that follow and not keeping the word of God and the blessings being withheld.

[33 : 29] And we sit here as Christians and think, it doesn't work like that anymore. It doesn't, right? Because we're under grace. Well, let me remind you, you are under grace.

You are under grace. And salvation is completely by grace alone through faith alone. But it's not unconditional. You know, when we speak of Christ's love, when we speak of what Christ did for us, we should never use the word unconditional in the wrong context.

God loves me unconditionally. No, he doesn't. No, he doesn't. He loves you forever, but you need to understand that his love is demonstrated to you through Jesus fulfilling the conditions of the cross.

Okay, you get to receive his love unconditionally. But the way that it comes to you unconditionally is by the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilling all the conditions that God laid down.

Can this cup be passed from me? No. No. Can it go to, no. Okay, God says yes to you because he said no to Jesus.

[34 : 41] Okay, so when we think about the unconditional blessings that we receive, they're unconditional from our point of view. We didn't do anything to get them. But they're not unconditional from God's point of view because that would take away the accomplishment of Jesus.

Jesus fulfilled every condition. The Lamb of God without spot or blemish. One who would submit to the will of God.

One who would not deny God in the garden, but who give his life up a ransom for many. Without Jesus fulfilling all of that, we wouldn't have any of the blessings we do in Christ.

You are right to say that they are unconditional in the sense that they are unconditional to you. You didn't do anything to get them. But please remember to use that wisely, to use it carefully.

You have them because of everything Jesus did. Okay, everything that he did. Here's the exhortation as we close. Solomon recognizes, Solomon recognizes that God is a God who blesses, but he is also a God who blesses in terms of curses.

[35 : 53] The curses are a means of getting his own people back on track. Now, the person going through the curse, the person going through the act of misery that God sends, will never consider it to be that way because he's walking in the opposite direction and it feels rotten.

But God works all things together for the good. God knows what he's doing and he knows why he's doing it. So God sends blessings which the people understand to be blessings when they obey and then he says blessings in the forms of curses which they understand to be curses, but as a means of blessing them to get them back on track with God.

Solomon knows this is how God will deal with his people in the future because this is how God has dealt with his people in the past. God is consistent.

God is consistent. The other thing to notice about God here is that God is both at the same time unapproachable. You read verse 11 so that the priest could not stand to minister because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

In other words, you have this picture of God being completely unapproachable because of his glory and God cannot be contained in the Ark of the Covenant or in a temple and yet at the same time being completely approachable in prayer.

[37 : 17] Okay? Unapproachable in his glory but completely approachable in the prayer of Solomon and that's the God we worship. We worship of God who is over all and in all who cannot be contained and whose glory cannot be approached but we have the privilege of being able to get down on our hands and knees and entering into his presence in prayer.

This is the God we worship. So here's the final thought. When you realize, at least really realize, that your God, our God, the God of the universe cannot be contained, you might ask, well why is our gathering necessary?

Why are we here? Why is there such a thing as church? If God cannot be contained and he is everywhere, then he is everywhere where I am. Why the need to come together and worship God as if God turns up here?

Well, that's the point. God does turn up here in a way that he doesn't turn up there in the world and that's called corporate worship. It's the same reason for the feast.

Okay? The reason why the feast needs to happen a week long is because it is the only and right and proper response to understanding who God is. Okay?

[38 : 36] We don't put on a half hour feast for God. Okay? No. This week long feast is to recognize the enormity of God, to recognize the glory of God.

Could it have gone on longer? Much longer. Okay? Could it go on forever? Yeah. Much forever given who God is. But humanly speaking there has to be a limit. So the reason we come together and worship God corporately is for exactly the same reason God's people come together here corporately and hold this feast before the Lord because God, okay, is to be worshipped by his people corporately.

What does it mean? Well, it means this. On the Lord's Day like today, you have both a privilege and a responsibility. The privilege is this, that you have to remember or ought to remember that you have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Okay? There is a new temple and you are it, Peter says. Okay? There is a brand new temple and you are that temple. You are the new people of God in which God dwells.

That's who we are. When we gather together, we are recognizing the kingdom that cannot be shaken and the fact that we are the new temple, bigger and better than Solomon's temple and in whom God dwells.

[39 : 57] This is what we are recognizing. But at the same time, this means that the type of change we want to see out there in the world must be the type of change that first needs to take place in here in the church.

When we worship God in the heavenlies, as Ephesians tells us, like we're doing here, okay, we're sat here thinking we're all by ourselves. But we need to recognize that God is with us and the angels look on in the heavenlies.

Okay? We know what's in the heavenlies because we get to read the New Testament and the book of Revelation. We know what's there wherever the heavenlies are located. I want to say above us because there's a roof and stars and sky and, you know, when a child asks you, where is heaven exactly?

And they show you a picture of the world and you go, well, it's not near Mars. I'm pretty sure about that. It's not near Jupiter. Where do you, I'm not sure where to locate it. But the heavenlies is not here, okay, in one sense.

But the heavenlies is here in another sense that we worship God in the heavenlies as we worship God like this. And any change that we want to see in the world must be first a change that we want to see in here.

[41 : 08] In fact, we can go as far to say that the type of changes that will happen in the world for the good and for the glory of God will first be seen in the church. And if they are not seen in the church, they will never be seen in the world.

Okay? Let me say it again. If they are not seen in the church, they are very unlikely never to be seen in the world. Why? Because we want to see peace and prosperity. Okay? We want to see people united and loving God and bowing down and worship Him.

Well, the church is already that. That's what church is. We see it every week. Okay? But if we're losing it here, if we're losing that battle in here, we're definitely losing that battle out there.

So the type of change we want to see out there is the type of change that must first take place in here. The reason we worship God according to the word of God is because, simply, that's how God wants it to be done.

Amen. Amen.