

A Firmly Rooted Faith – Part IV
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1 & 2 Kings
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Turn with me in your Bible to 1 Kings and Chapter 12. We're going to be reading the first few verses of Chapter 13, but we're going to start in 1 Kings 12:25. I'm going to need to introduce the message before we read a little more than normal, and I want to do that. We titled this series of messages 'A Firmly Rooted Faith', and the idea undergirding it is that we need to know that the things that we believe are really rooted in the Scriptures, and that it is not shady interpretations of things that we believe. What we believe is what the Bible teaches, and what it teaches is not just in the New Testament, but all the way through the Old Testament. That the doctrines of the Gospel that we believe, the doctrines of justification, that sinful men are made right before a holy God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This doctrine, these doctrines, go all the way through from Revelation all the way to Genesis. One message, in two covenants, two testaments, but one message. The God of the Old Testament *is* the God of the New Testament. The God of the New Testament *is* the God of the Old Testament. We see this as we carefully look at the teachings of Scripture.

So we're working through a very brief survey of the Old Testament with a view towards seeing these larger, broader things. We've looked at passages before introducing these studies each week. When I would read the Scripture in early part, we've read from Luke 24 where Jesus preached that amazing message on the road to Emmaus, to those disciples, showing them how, in the law, and the prophets, and the writings, everything pointed to Him. We've talked about, we've read the passage in John 5 before one of the messages where Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you'll find life, but these they are that testify of Me. If you'd believe Moses, you would believe Me for he wrote about Me." So the Old Testament is pointing to Christ, and sometimes we see it in particular verses, and particular places, but also we see it in the broad sweep of the Old Testament. And that is what we are looking at, the broad sweep of the Old Testament.

This is our fourth message in the series 'A Firmly Rooted Faith'. We looked early on at the first five books of the Bible, in the first message, the law, Genesis through Deuteronomy, and we saw that what God does is He lays down a type there that then governs the way He deals with His people. Basically, the premise that I set before you is this, that God is not only revealing to the Nation of Israel who He is,

but He is even revealing through the Nation of Israel who He is. That is that His dealings with the people are part of the message, a core and central part of the message, and that He was revealing to them, and through them, who He is in the ways He dealt with them all along. We mentioned one of my favorite quotes from John Calvin where he points out that in the Scriptures God condescends to speak in our language. He condescends to baby-talk with us. He prattles with us, Calvin says. He speaks in ways we can understand and He does this early on as the Bible begins to unfold, particularly in the Old Testament in these types, in these pictures.

We see this affirmed clearly in the New Testament, particularly in Hebrews 11, where we pointed out how Canaan, when God promised Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yet they never possessed it. It was some 685 years later that the promise to Abraham was fulfilled. Why does God make a promise 685 years ahead of time? Because He was teaching them that, “It is not Canaan that I’m really talking about.” Hebrews 11 says that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob come to understand that. They were looking for the city whose builder and maker is God, a Heavenly Kingdom, and so Canaan was a type of Heaven. So this fundamental question that the Bible addresses is this: How can sinful people like you and me come to dwell in God’s land, in God’s presence? The question is, how do we get to Heaven? The whole Bible is teaching the answer to that question. How can sinful people come to dwell in God’s presence, in God’s land?

We saw the Exodus showed us that we have to be delivered from the kingdom of darkness. We have to be delivered from bondage. We are slaves just like the Nation of Israel was. We are slaves to Satan who is our father in unbelief and we’re slaves to sin. Then we saw, even in the conquest of the land in Joshua, how can we enter God’s land? How can we enter Heaven? There must be an outpouring of wrath. The wrath of God must be set loose if we are going to enter into His Kingdom. We saw it expressed in God’s wrath upon the nations in Canaan, but that the real picture was the wrath that had to be poured out on God’s precious Son at Calvary.

Then last time, January 12, we were looking at 1 and 2 Samuel, the United Kingdom. As God continues to work with His people, the question is: How can God’s people dwell in God’s land? We need God’s King. He is teaching us a little more. He is putting together more and more of the picture of what the Messiah must be, what we need to be saved. You and I need to be delivered from sin, delivered from the dominion of sin, delivered from evil. We need the wrath of God to be poured out, not on us, but on a substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. The wrath we deserved poured out on Him, and we also need to come under His authority.

We need to be submitted to Him. He teaches that in that period of time, the 120 years, the reign of Saul, and David, and Solomon. The 120 years of the United Kingdom of Israel.

Now we come to today, to the divided kingdom. It is a 345-year period, starting in 931 with the death of Solomon, and ending in 586 with the exile of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. I know we read so many different Bible stories, you were taught Bible stories through the years. Did you have the problem like I did that you can't place them in context? When is Elijah? Gideon, where does he come? This kind of thing. Well hopefully, we need to work at getting that, and I'm trying to give you a little bit of a sketch that might help some of those things fall into place, some folders to organize things in. Essentially, the divided kingdom happens when God judges Solomon for sin late in his life, takes the kingdom, ten tribes of the kingdom, away from him, and gives them to a man named Jeroboam. His son Rehoboam is going to rule the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom, and Jeroboam has the bulk of the people of Israel now in the Northern Kingdom. There is a civil war that breaks out, and this one Kingdom of God has now become two separate kingdoms—north and south. The Northern Kingdom is called Israel. It retains the name Israel. The Southern Kingdom is called Judah because Judah is the key tribe in the Southern Kingdom. David was of Judah, so the kings of the Southern Kingdom, the kings of Judah, are the descendants of David. They are the ones who received the promise—"Through you God is going to send the true King. He is going to be a descendant of David."

But the Northern Kingdom has also got its kings, and so from 931 to 722, the Northern Kingdom exists, almost 200 years. Then it is exiled, destroyed really, by the Assyrians. The Southern Kingdom is left alone for the next 130 some odd years until it finally wears out God's patience and it is exiled in 586. So you have the kings of the north, the kings of the south. Let me put some names on this. Some kings of the north that you would be familiar with, probably the most that you'd be familiar with are a guy named, maybe, Omri, Jehu, and most famously, Ahab. Ahab is the one that had the conflict with Elijah, remember? Then the kings of the south, the kings of Judah, the kings like Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah. These are the stories that are happening in particular. I mentioned Elijah, Elijah and Elisha minister primarily to the Northern Kingdom in the 9th Century, from 900 to about 800 B.C. So all the stories, Elijah on Mount Carmel, that happens in this period. Elisha and the miracles that he does happen in this period. Wicked King Ahab and his ungodly, evil wife Jezebel happened in this period. The prophets' ministry is inaugurated by Elijah and Elisha. They are prophets who don't write a book, and they may have contributed to some of the books like 1 and 2 Kings

possibly, but they didn't have, we don't have a book of Elijah, or a book of Elisha. But they inaugurate the prophetic office that we then have 16 books in our Bible—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, etc., all the way down. This is all happening in that period. Most of the prophets, 12 of the 16 prophets write during the period we're talking about today, 931 to 586. But the question they are asking is the same question that the whole Bible is asking, how can we ever hope to dwell in God's land? The focus here is on how can we remain in God's land? How can we who are sinful come to the place that we can remain in the presence of a holy God? And the themes of 1 and 2 Kings answer that. The surprising theme, at least to me, you know you think of these books as historical books, sometimes we refer to them, but the surprising theme of 1 and 2 Kings is worship. It's all about the need for true worship and the failure of the people of God to truly worship Him. And because of the failure of true worship, they become ungodly, and wicked. There is no hope and they are cast, the land basically vomits them out, to use the language of Leviticus.

Now, let me explain it to you how you see worship is the key theme. Think with me about the book in general. I mentioned Solomon, we talked about him last time, but we need to talk about him for just a moment today because he sets the stage in 1 and 2 Kings. He is the last king in the United Kingdom of Israel, and the first 11 chapters of 1 Kings are about him. His wisdom is legendary, his heart for God early on in his life is exemplary. He is the son of David, it looks like he might be the Messiah in early days of his life. He is the one who builds the temple. In fact, 1 Kings 5, 6, 7 and 8 are all about the construction of the temple, the permanent place of dwelling for God's presence and glory. What is the temple? The temple is not just the dwelling of God, but it is the meeting place for God and man. Solomon makes it permanent, according to God's will, in Jerusalem. Now the place where God meets man is fixed and established.

This is a high point, when you read those first chapters of 1 Kings, these are the glory days. I mean, Israel is thriving, they are being blessed. Solomon's splendor is so great people are coming from other places just to be around him. When he builds a temple, he finishes it. He has all these great craftsmen, incredible wisdom about the construction of it. When it is finished the cloud of glory comes down and dwells upon it just like it did when Moses built the tabernacle. What a mountaintop experience. It seems as if we've arrived, the people of God are now where God wants them—in His land, in His presence. But what happens shortly after that, as the book unfolds in 1 Kings 11, we see Solomon departs from the Lord. His sin of marrying foreign women leads to false worship. He begins to become an idolater and worship the other gods and the Lord judges him by taking the kingdom and

splitting it. He waits until Solomon dies, He tells Solomon before he dies, “I’m judging you. I’m taking the kingdom from you, but it won’t happen until after you die.” Then He takes these two kingdoms now, and He deals with these two kingdoms. The kings of the north and the kings of the south. The theme continues to be throughout. What you have when you read 1 and 2 Kings, you’ve got to work at it as you’re going through it because you’ll be talking about the king of Judah, and then the next thing you know you are talking about the king of Israel, and it goes back and forth like this. Kind of like some of the novels nowadays that just move from one scene to the other. 1 and 2 Kings is like that. But what is the focal point throughout? It is worship and true worship. Let me explain this. One of the things you see when you look at the kings of the north, one of the key phrases in the book of 1 and 2 Kings is *‘The sins of Jeroboam’*. The phrase occurs 14 times, *‘The sins of Jeroboam’*, it is like a refrain throughout the book.

Jeroboam is the first king of the north. He commits a sin that haunts the people of the Northern Kingdom throughout their entire history. In fact, every king that is talked about of the 19 kings of the north, this is the refrain, “But he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, with which he made Israel sin.” What were the sins of Jeroboam? What Jeroboam did, let me tell you, when the kingdom split, he’s got the Northern Kingdom, ten tribes. The Southern Kingdom, under Rehoboam, the names are all so challenging too, aren’t they? I’m not going to use a lot of them because it’s just, I get mixed up. I wish it was Larry and Jim. Jeroboam is the king of the north, Rehoboam is the king of the south. They have a civil war for a while and then God sends a prophet to tell Rehoboam, “Stop fighting him. This is My doing,” and so he stops fighting. And Jeroboam, the Lord has placed it over that kingdom for a time to be separated, but what he does is he devises in his own mind a strategy of how to keep the people of the north together. What he does, something that seems actually when you think about it, kind of logical. He says, “You know, I’ve got all these people to look after, and if they have to go down to Jerusalem, in Judah, to worship the Lord, I’m going to lose them. So I’m going to make some franchises of the temple. I’m going to make other places for worship,” and he makes two. We’re going to look at the passage that talks about that. It seems like a fairly reasonable sort of thing, and you know a lot of ungodly, wicked things are fairly reasonable. But he completely misunderstands what God was doing in putting His place of worship in one place. Look with me at this passage. It is 1 Kings 12:25.

1 Kings 12:25-33 ~ Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. 26 Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will return to

the house of David. 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” 28 So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, (Isn’t that astonishing? He hadn’t been reading his Bible much, had he?) and he said to them, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.” 29 He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. 31 And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. 32 Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month (Look at this...) which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.

“I’m just going to make this work for the people. I’m going to make it expedient, it’s going to be more convenient. In a sense, they had to go a long way to get to Jerusalem. I’m going to make it much easier.” Look at what God does, the same time he gets there on that day, the Lord has sent someone to be there. Verse 1 of Chapter 13:

1 Kings 13:1-6 ~ Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. 2 He cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, “O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.’” 3 Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, ‘Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.’” 4 Now when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Seize him.” But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself. 5 The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to

the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 6 The king said to the man of God, "Please entreat the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me." So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before.

Let's pray together.

Father, we come now asking for Your Spirit to work through Your word to show us Your way, and help us to walk in it. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now this idea, what Jeroboam does here, is called 'The sins of Jeroboam', and again, and again, and again that phrase occurs. 'The sins of Jeroboam' I said is mentioned 14 times, 6 other times, when it talks about a king, you'll have this formula. "Now in the 27th year of Asa, he died, and his son Jehoshaphat began to reign in Jerusalem. And Jehoshaphat was like his father David, and he sought the Lord." Or it will say, "Ahab became king, and he did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He walked in the sins of Jeroboam. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam." Then it'll go on to talk about more stuff he did, but that refrain happens again and again. Out of the 19 kings of the Northern Kingdom, 16 times it says, "He walked in the sins of Jeroboam." The other three walked in them, but they only reigned like a month, two months, and two years. There wasn't time for them to. Had they, they would have been the same thing. In fact, the best king of the north, 19 kings of north, all of them bad.

The best king was Jehu, whom God raised up to destroy the house of Ahab, by the word of Elijah. "They are going to lick your blood from this same place, Ahab, you wicked king. Jezebel, the dogs are going to eat you," and it happened exactly as he said. Each time that God has evaluated the king, He says this: "They walked in the sins of Jeroboam." So Jeroboam's sin was to say, "It doesn't really matter where you worship the Lord." He wasn't trying to lead them after other gods. Remember what he said? He said the same thing Aaron said. Did you hear that echo? When he made the golden calf he said, "Behold your gods who brought you up from the land of Egypt," just like Aaron did. He's saying, "This is Yahweh. This is the Lord. Worship the Lord through this idol. And we want to make it more convenient for you. You can go to Dan or to Bethel. You don't have to go to Jerusalem." God hated that. I mentioned Jehu being the least bad of the kings. When you look at Jehu, the King of the North, he destroys Ahab, he puts to death the prophets of Baal, and there is the statement that says this: "Thus Jehu drove the worship of Baal from the land." That's pretty good! The next verse says, "But

he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam.” He did all of this that was good, but he missed the most important thing. Why is that so important to the Lord? When you read that you kind of need to ask the question, “Why, Lord? Why didn’t you let them have franchises? I mean, You could have authorized the franchises. We know Jeroboam shouldn’t have made golden calves, that is clear, he was wrong, but I mean it is a long way to go.” Every time they had to take a sin offering, somebody living up in the area that later would be called Galilee, would have to take a four or five day journey. It is uphill to Jerusalem. I mean, think about that. It would be like you walking to Macon. To be worse than that, no, make it the other direction, you walking to Hiawassee. Just walk up there so you can offer your sacrifice. That’s a lot of trouble. “Lord, couldn’t You have planned better?” “I’m going to help you out,” Jeroboam says, “and I’m going to keep the kingdom to myself.” He had a selfish motivation that he rationalized, I’m sure, with these other kinds of thoughts. And then there’s the Southern Kingdom.

One of the other key phrases in the book of 1 and 2 Kings is the phrase *high place* or *high places*. What were the high places? The high places were the places where people worshiped the Lord. Like the pagans around them, they would try to go to high places. This is something that’s still in modern paganism that we have in America. You go up into the mountains and you find a lot of weird people. I’m not trying to say it’s all weird people. There are a lot of wonderful, godly people up there too, but if you just look for it, you’ll find that there are more of these wiccan people, because they believe that getting up to high places puts them closer to the powers that are out there.

This is what they believed, and the Israelites thought, “Hey, this high place thing we see working really well for all the other gods, we need to do it. Let’s worship Yahweh on high places,” and you don’t have to go all the way to Jerusalem. It’s even in the Southern Kingdom, and what you see is there were 20 kings of the Southern Kingdom. Eight of them God basically pronounces as pleasing to Him, eight good kings, and twelve bad ones. Of the eight good ones, six of them, it will talk about, like I said Jehoshaphat, he walked in the ways of his father David. His heart was wholly devoted to the Lord, and it’ll say this, “Yet the high places he did not remove.” Asa, same thing. The only two kings who removed the high places were Hezekiah and Josiah. Uzziah left the high places. Ahaziah left the high places. Azariah left the high places. Amaziah left the high places. They followed the Lord but they left the high places. They left these other places of worship. They didn’t think it was that important to make the people realize there’s only one place that you can meet with God, and it’s the temple in Jerusalem.

The Lord, through His word, keeps like a song, a refrain in a song, and when you look at the Northern King, he walked in the sins of Jeroboam, and then a paragraph down he's talking about the Southern King, and, "Yet he left the high places." The next is the Northern King, "He walked in the sins of Jeroboam." The next paragraph: "Yet the Southern King left the high places." God is saying, "What I want is My worship done My way, and I am jealous for that, and it's not up to sinful men to make up ways to worship Me." It's not enough to be sincere when you go to the high place. It's not enough to be sincere when you go to Bethel, or Dan, to the Golden Calf. That is still under the wrath of a holy God.

Why is that so important to the Lord? It's still a good question if we ask it reverently. "Lord, this is so important to You. Why? It does seem impractical. Why is it so important to You?" There is only one meeting place between God and man. In fact, it goes all the way back to the beginning. You know when the tent of meeting was made in Moses' day, the Lord gave careful prescriptions for the tent of meeting, the tabernacle. At that time that was the first place of meeting between God and man, and it was a tent. Solomon's making that tent into a building, right? But the tent of meeting, you read that phrase dozens of times in each of the books of the Pentateuch. Tent of meeting, they have trouble translating that phrase, because it really means, the Hebrew word is not tent of meeting, so much, but it is *appointed tent*. The word means established, fixed, appointed, and I don't know why they don't translate it with something like that, because that's really what the word means.

So when the Lord gave the tent of meeting, He's saying, "This is a place that I have established. This is the place out of all the face of the earth that I have fixed. Now, My place moves, but it's that tent," and now the one place that you can meet with God, He puts in Jerusalem. And basically when the Northern Kingdom is annihilated by the Assyrians, His argument at the end of 2 Kings is, "This happened because they did not worship Me rightly." When the Southern Kingdom is spewed out of the land, "This happened because they did not worship Me rightly. They did not come to My one place with a whole heart for Me." What does that mean for us, and what did that mean to them? What was that supposed to mean for them? It was to make very clear, emphatically clear, this important truth, that when God wanted to save sinners like you and me, a God who describes Himself in Exodus 34, remember when Moses asked to see His glory and he sees the back of God's robe pass by? He puts him in the cleft of the rock and he can't see His face.

What's more significant than what he sees is what he hears. "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands..." Do you hear all of that love and compassion and mercy? That is the Lord. That is who He is. That is why David over and over in the Psalms, and the psalmists themselves, even when they're in sin, they run to God as their refuge, because I know there's a verse I was reading this week, "Remember me according to your lovingkindness, O Lord. Do not remember me according to my iniquity." We run to Him because of who He is, but listen to this. He's a God who invites us to come. He's always saying, "Come to Me. Come to Me. Come to Me and be saved," but He says, "You must come My way. You don't make up in your own heart the way you want to approach Me, for I am holy, but if you come My way, you will find My favor. I will draw you to Myself, and you'll be My precious child, and I will pour out my love upon you, and show My glory to you, and fill your heart as you never imagined being filled. But you must come My way."

It's so important that you understand that there's one way, because the sinfulness of man, the deceitfulness of sin, this world system that clouds things, He wanted to make emphatically clear at this point in history that there is one meeting place between God and man, one and only one, so that when His Son came, the Lord Jesus Christ, when John describes Him coming into the world, he says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." In that word *tabernacle*, he's saying the Word became flesh. God becomes a man and the temple of God at that moment in time is the body of Jesus Christ. Remember what Jesus says when He is healing at the Passover and He cleanses the temple, and they say, "By what authority do You cleanse our temple?" He goes and says, "You've made My Father's house a house of robbers," and they had a good reason, I think they had a very reasonable question. "Who is this guy who's coming in here?"

I mean, it's like somebody coming in today and they start throwing over our pots and taking our chairs up, people from outside. I think that we would say, "Excuse me. What are you doing?" That's essentially what the chief priests and rulers of the temple were doing. "What are You doing? By what authority do You do this?" and Jesus said this: "This is My authority. Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it." They mocked Him. "It took 46 years to build this temple and You think You're going to raise it in three days?" They didn't realize (John says) that He was talking about the temple of His body, because at that moment in time, the Shekinah glory wasn't behind the veil. The Shekinah glory was in His flesh. That's why he says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory."

What God is saying is, “Listen, there is only one meeting place between God and man. There is one and only one. There is no other,” and everyone who says that there is another is lying and is dishonoring the God of the Bible who’s made this so emphatically clear. There is one and only one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. This means that no one can be saved apart from meeting Jesus. You must come to Jesus. You can’t just be sincere in your own religion and God save you. No, you must come to Jesus Christ, the Jesus of the Bible, not the Jesus that people sometimes make up, some Jesus that’s not the Jesus of this book, because the Jesus that God presents to us is the Jesus of this book.

Sometimes people ask, “What about the heathen that’s never heard the Gospel?” All we can say is what the Bible says. To be saved, you must come to know Jesus Christ. Peter says in Acts 4:12, “There is no other name given among men by which we must be saved than the name of Jesus.” Now, history is replete with stories of people who God worked in, prepared their hearts, and people in dark places in Africa, New Guinea, were crying out in their hearts to the God of heaven that they saw revealed around them, stories of one tribe where a white messenger will come. They’d never seen a white man before. Not too long and a white messenger came, a missionary, and he preached Jesus and they were saved. It’s not hard for the Lord to get His word to people who want it. If people are seeking Him, He will find them. Now, we know they’re only seeking Him because He’s already sought them, but there is one meeting place between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, and so salvation happens only in Jesus.

Now, there are further implications than just that, though. Think about what this means. God is creating a people who worship, and the way that we worship is to be in the presence of Jesus, to be centered upon Jesus. What he’s telling us in this passage is that the church of God and the people of God must be Christ centered. It’s not enough just to gather together and to sing and to talk about morality, to talk about the power of the Holy Spirit, to talk about miracles, to talk about needs in your life. If you are not lifting up Jesus Christ, you are not promoting true worship, because worship does not happen apart from Jesus Christ. So you can test ministries by this. You might say, “Well there sure was a lot of emotion. People were weeping. There was the spirit moving. I could feel it.” And you can feel it. It’s not *the* Spirit but you can feel it, and it can be deceptive and it can be alluring, but the question is this: Was Jesus Christ lifted up?

If He was not, you can turn away from that, because they’re worshipping somewhere other than the designated place, and it won’t be long before it becomes

evident, because when you're off by this far at this distance, the farther you go in the sighting of the rifle, the farther you depart. Jesus Christ is to be everything to the church, and when the Holy Spirit is truly there, He makes sure that Jesus Christ is everything to the church. That's what Jesus told them in John's Gospel in 14 to 16 when he talks about the Holy Spirit. "He will not speak to you of Himself. He will bring to mind everything about Me." That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now, it not only has implications for worship, but it has implications for us after we're saved. And if you're here today and you are not following Jesus, if you have not met Jesus, then no matter whether you think you're a Christian, or you've been baptized, or you're a church member, or you're a church leader, or whatever, if you have not met Jesus Christ, you're not saved. But the good news is He is inviting you today to repent and believe upon Him, to go to Him, not to go to a church. He works in the church but it's not coming to us, or to the front, or to a pastor, or to someone evangelizing you. It is coming to Jesus Christ Himself.

Now, once you're saved, our lives are to be lived as true worship before God every moment of every day. This is what He's telling us. He wants us to be people who are worshiping Him. It was there from Genesis 1. The image of God are those who reflect back to God the radiance of His worth. We replicate and reflect Him. We're made like Him to know Him, and in knowing Him, in looking at Him, to shine His glory like a mirror looking up at the sun shines it and reflects it down. We're made to look into the face of God and love Him, and in our worship, reflect His glory, His beauty to the world, and that's what He's teaching when He draws man into a relationship with Him, when He tells them to build the tabernacle, and now when He establishes the temple. It's all about worship. Your lives are to be centered around worship.

The calendar was about worship. All of the festivals that God instituted, reminding them we're here to worship. The Sabbath, every seventh day set apart especially for worship. The dietary laws, you can't eat this, you can eat that. It's all passed away now. It doesn't apply anymore, but it was teaching them. It was baby-talking with them, "You're to be thinking about worship on Tuesday when you're eating, because what you eat on Tuesday will affect you on Saturday on the Sabbath. It's all about worship. All of our lives are to be about worship. It's one thing to understand that theoretically. It's one thing to proclaim that, to preach it. It's another to live it.

What does that really look like? It means that we are to labor in our lives as Christians. We're to make it our first business. The first priority every day is to seek the face of Jesus Christ. I don't mean go through the motions of just reading

the Bible and praying. It means seek His face. Seek His presence. Yearn to be with Him and earnestly asking Him to even create more yearning as you come. Sometimes the prayer is like this: “I know that what I need is to be with You, but before that, I even know that what I need is to want to be with You. Help me.” That’s a prayer He hears and answers. “Help me to see Jesus. I know where I need to go is to Jesus. Help me.”

We’re to live our lives in communion with Jesus Christ, and to make that our business, and to try to remember that as many times as we can throughout the day, praising Him, thanking Him, glorying in Him. We’re to be encouraging one another while it’s still called today. We’re to be speaking in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs about Jesus and encouraging each other, “Keep looking at Jesus.” It is the essential thing. Everything else flows from that, and when you forget that, you’ve lost almost everything. I mean, if you’re truly saved, you can’t lose your salvation, but you lose your joy. You lose your peace. You lose freedom. You get burdened down. Sin becomes much more of a problem. But when you’re communing with Jesus and you’re learning about communing with Him, to see His glory, I mean, just like them going into the tabernacle or the temple offering their sacrifices, seeing God’s glory come down, feeling His blessing, thrilled their souls so that David could say, “The one thing I ask, the one thing I want, Lord, this will I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord.”

It’s not just to dwell in the house, to feel good that I’m dwelling in the house. I want to dwell in the house to behold Your beauty, because You are what I long for. And we have to let God’s word—we’re going to see this next time. This is really the *Where?* of worship, which is what He deals with first in 1 Kings, and then secondly is *How?* How is the Word, but where is at the feet of Jesus. This is where we are to live is at the feet of Jesus. And this applies to you and me so much, and I want to tell you something that God’s really been hammering on me in the last five or six weeks. I appreciate your prayers for me when I was sick. I was sick for eight or nine days. I had a kind of a relapse of well, you know, so many of us have had the bad cold going around, and I ran a fever for eight or nine days, and in God’s providence I took some steroids, and I don’t plan to do that again. It took me into a real, I think, emotional just emptiness. I’ve never been depressed like you hear about so many people deal with this, and many of you probably have dealt with times where you were really depressed.

I had just a brief season of it, maybe ten or twelve days of depression. So it was a very small time, but I think the Lord did that to sort of strip away some things, and in that period of time, He just started dealing with my heart. He started showing me

areas of deficiency in my own heart, and at the heart of it was this. It's as if He was saying to me—at the time, I was in such anguish and such pain as I was convicted under these things. I couldn't really see clearly, but now coming out the other side, I think He was saying, "Your heart has left Me. You've forsaken your first love. You need to come back to Me, and I've pulled back all the blessings so that you can see what you are when I pull back My hand," and I saw I'm nothing, utterly nothing.

What He did in that by His grace was He created in me a hunger and a yearning for Him, and I was crying out to Him, weeping before Him in the mornings. I mean, there are so many days I would just wake up, get alone with Him, and just cry, and I was in the Psalms. I'm so grateful for the Psalms, just reading five Psalms a day, or whatever day of the month it is, add 30, add 30, add 35 Psalms, and you go through the whole Psalter in a month. And I just found in David the same experience echoes of what my own heart was feeling. "Lord, I need You. I want You. I know that I've sinned and I've forgotten You. Help me." And His word, His precious word, would show to me the glory of who He is, that He is a God of compassion, that though I have sinned in forgetting Him, here He was lovingly calling me back to Himself, His Spirit working through His word, showing me my need and showing me the sufficiency of my Savior over, and over, and over again, creating in me that desire, "Lord I WANT to want to be with You like I ought to. I realize I've lost it."

Somehow in ministry, I'm doing it and I'm preaching it, but I'm not really for my own soul, first saying, "I need You for me, because I am thirsty and hungry. Like a deer panting for the water brook, so my soul thirsts for You," and that is a wonderful place to be. He says, "Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." That's who the Lord is. He makes us hungry for Him and then He opens His hand and satisfies us. He makes us thirsty for Him and then He lets the fountains of His goodness and His glory spill into our lives and overwhelm us. You and I as Christians have to continue to remind each other, because we're sheep. We forget. We talk about these things and we say these things. I preach these things. We all do. We know these things, and yet if we're not careful, somehow we've left, and we're talking about it, but we're not connecting in a living, vital, loving relationship with our Savior.

God wants that for every one of His children. He wants that for every person on the face of the earth. He invites all, and if you look to Him, He will say, "Come," and He will bless you. Worship is everything. Worshiping Him is everything, and you know the more that you worship Him like that, I remember one of the things I

thought about and the Lord convicted me of is I wasn't wanting to be in heaven like I should. I realized that I'm not longing for heaven. I should be longing for heaven. And the Lord in taking me in that valley and then communing with me out of that valley, walking with me in that valley, I felt like the little lamb that's had his leg broken and riding on the back of the shepherd. You hear that voice and you feel His breath. That little lamb knows that the closeness of the shepherd, the nearness of God, is my greatest good. I just want to be near Him. That's what He wants for all of us for every day of our lives. Isn't that amazing that God wants that for you and me? And yet it's true. Jesus is proof of that.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Our Father, we exalt Your Name. We glory in Your great salvation and we pray for everyone in this room, that You would search our hearts, You who see the secret intentions, and You see everything about us, the motives, the hidden agendas that we don't even understand ourselves, You see all. Search us and know our hearts. Try us and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. For Your people, Lord, may You say in a very personal way to each person here who belongs to You, "Seek My face," and may we keep hearing that day after day and answering back, "Your face, oh Lord, I will seek." And for those who are lost who don't know you, that same call, "Seek My face." Grant them grace to seek Your face, to answer back from their hearts, from a new heart, "Yes, Your face, oh Lord, I will seek," and may they find Your love in Jesus Christ to be the satisfaction of every desire. We pray this in Jesus' marvelous Name, Amen.

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