

The King Who is Lord of his Temple

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bible readings this morning and we're reading again in Luke's Gospel chapter 20. If you have one of our blue visitor's Bibles, you'll find that on page 879.

And we've been a long time studying Luke's Gospel back and forward and we've just come back to study the final portion, the last section of Luke's Gospel, which we began last week at chapter 19, verse 28. And we're going to read this morning Luke 20, verses 1 to 19.

You'll see that in our Bibles, or at least in the church Bibles, the paragraph heading interrupts the flow of where we're going to be. It's in the wrong place. Nothing inspired about that, paying taxes to Caesar. It just gets in the way and annoys us. So ignore that this morning.

We'll read through to verse 19. One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes, the teachers of the law, with the elders, came up and said to him, tell us, by what authority do you do these things?

Or who is it that gave you this authority? So he answered them, I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, was the baptism of John the Baptist from heaven or from man?

[1 : 27] They discussed it with one another, saying, if we say from heaven, he will say, why did you not believe him? But if we say from man, all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.

So they answered that they did not know where it came from. And Jesus said to them, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

And he began to tell the people this parable. A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.

But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent another servant, but they also beat him and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent yet a third.

This one they wounded and cast out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, what shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Perhaps they will respect him.

[2 : 38] But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, this is the heir. Let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours. And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

And they heard this. They said, surely not. But he looked directly at them and said, what then is this that is written in their own scriptures? The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces. And when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour.

For they perceived that he had told this parable against them. But they feared the people. Amen. May God bless to us this his word.

[3 : 47] Well, do please take up your Bibles and open them to the passage that we read in Luke chapter 20, page 879.

If you have one of the blue Bibles, page 879. And it's a passage, as we'll see, all about the king who is lord of his temple.

Last week, we came back to Luke's gospel and we began to look at this last section, which is the climax of Jesus' long journey to the glory of his coming kingdom.

And as we saw, it all centers on Jerusalem and on the temple, because the road to Christ's glory must lead him through Jerusalem. And remember, we saw that Luke carefully orders the account

around two very distinct entries to Jerusalem.

As we'll come to in chapter 22, Jesus sends two disciples on ahead of him to borrow a room so that they can have the Passover together. And there he will tell his disciples privately that this is the climax of his earthly mission.

[4 : 59] He is the Lamb of God. He is the Savior, and he has come now to achieve his gracious redemption. And he pictures it for them in the Last Supper, and then he fulfills it in his death on the cross.

But before that, as we saw last time, Jesus makes a first very public entry into Jerusalem, beginning at chapter 19, verse 28, where likewise, again, he sends two disciples on ahead of him to borrow, this time a donkey, a colt.

And then he enters the city, not as the Lamb of God, but publicly as the Lion of Judah, as the sovereign come to announce his glorious rule and to call his people to join him.

And yet, as we saw last time, when he comes as king, offering peace to wayward people, even his own people reject him.

The most privileged generation of that most favored people, Israel, they reject him and they oppose him. As John says in chapter 1 of his gospel, he came to his own and his own received him not.

[6 : 11] Many, of course, did. You see in chapter 19, verse 48, many of the people were hanging on his words. But many others, and especially, we're told, the spiritual leaders of the nation, they did not.

Look at verse 47 of chapter 19. They wanted to destroy him. He entered the temple. He entered the very heart of Israel's life of faith.

But he finds there not the obedience of faith, but the disobedience of sheer unbelief. Indeed, vitriolic, murderous hatred is what he found.

It's utterly tragic, isn't it? And yet, it is deeply unsettling. Because that is not just a story that we read all through the history of Israel's religion, Israel's religious establishment, as we read the Old Testament and as we read into the Gospels.

That same attitude, alas, has all too often been the story of the religious establishment in what has called itself the Christian church through these last 2,000 years.

[7 : 17] And that's what makes this passage today so solemn, so desperately relevant today, just as it was for Luke's first readers. Because Jesus will not tolerate a household that ignores or rebels against its rightful head.

Not now. God has been very patient, extraordinarily so, with a recalcitrant people all through the history of the Old Testament ages.

That's what you read in the Bible. But now, with the coming of Jesus, a new age has dawned. The kingdom of God has begun on earth in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That was Jesus' constant ministry. The kingdom is in the midst of you, because I am now here in the midst of you. The king has come. And so the last days the prophets spoke of, the latter days, it's begun right here on planet earth, now.

And that's Jesus' whole gospel. The gospel of the kingdom of God is now inaugurated. It's begun in his person. But that means, you see, that there is a new sovereign authority here on earth for the people of God.

[8 : 33] God's household will be ruled no longer by just the word of Moses and the prophets.

Moses was indeed, as Hebrews chapter 2 tells us, Moses was faithful in all God's household as a servant, to bear testimony to the things that were to be spoken later.

But Christ, says the apostle, is faithful over God's household as a son. And we have entered now that age where Christ's personal sovereign rule over his household on earth is being expressed.

He rules his people. He rules his church. And that's what Luke is showing us so very plainly here in chapter 20 of his gospel. The king who comes in peace and offering peace is nevertheless the king who is lord of his temple.

And he will assert that sovereign rule now over his household. And what that means is that any institution that claims his name must bow to his authority.

Or else be swept into oblivion. Now, there can hardly be a more pertinent word for the church today, especially in our Western world, can there?

[9 : 52] So let's have a look at what Luke is teaching us. First of all, look at verses 1 to 8 of chapter 20, where Luke wants us to be very clear that Christ's sovereign authority is decisive for his earthly

household in this kingdom age of the latter days.

That is, his unique identity confers absolute authority and calls for total obedience in his church. And therefore, resistance to Christ's rule is absolutely inexcusable. Jesus spoke in chapter 19. Do you remember of Jerusalem's blindness and Israel's blindness in the face of his coming? In verse 42, the truth was hidden from their eyes for the most part. They would not see, and so in the end, they could not see.

But why is it that people are so blind to the truth about Jesus? Well, I'll tell you. The answer lies in one of the key words of this passage we're looking at now in chapter 20.

[10:57] It's the word authority. The authority of Jesus Christ as ruler and Lord. See, spiritual blindness is not a matter of deficient eyes.

It's a matter of defiant knees. Knees that will not bow to the authority of Jesus Christ. See, if you will see who Jesus really is, then you will have to submit to him as Lord of all.

If he truly is the unique Son of God, then he has absolute and supreme authority. And you have to surrender to him. And that is what people hate.

The secular world around us today is enraged at that very thought. How dare we have to listen to what the Bible says about how we're to live? What possible right have you, Jesus, to tell me how to live my life?

That's what our society says, isn't it? So we want to get rid of all such things out of the public square. Get rid of all of that teaching out of our schools, out of our campuses, out of our politics.

[12:05] Look at the derision that Tim Farron was faced with in becoming leader of the Liberal Democrats when he professed his Christian faith and was derided on the radio and the television.

But increasingly, not just in the secular world roundabout, but the church authorities so often will do the same thing, just a bit more quietly.

We won't have Christ's sole authority ruling the roost in our church. No fear. No, we decide how to interpret his words and reinterpret his words. And so we'll silence in the church.

It's what we don't really like, what doesn't really fit. We'll assert our institutional authority over him, not vice versa. Now, friends, that is what we see all around us in the historic churches in the Western world today.

But that is not new. It's right here in Luke chapter 20. It goes right back to the beginning. The church authorities, the scribes, the Pharisees, the priests, the elders, verse 1, they challenge Jesus' authority with a question.

[13:09] That's clearly not a genuine question. They want to trap him. They want to damage him. We're told in verse 20 and verse 26 that they keep on doing exactly that. It's just like the Today program on Radio 4, isn't it?

It's so tiresome, isn't it? I don't know if you listen in the mornings as I do. I'm getting so fed up with those presenters. They're so full of themselves. And they don't ask genuine questions, do they? They deliberately want to trap somebody into saying something unwise and then exploit it mercilessly for the rest of the day, making news from what's been said, so that every bulletin says, oh, so-and-so said on this program, da-da-da-da.

They want to trap them. I've got very fed up with Radio 4 in the morning. I'm moving to Classic FM for a pleasant break. I can't stand any more of that stress first thing in the morning.

But wouldn't it be great, wouldn't it be great, just to have John Humphreys face just once with the Lord Jesus Christ for an interview? Wouldn't that be good? Well, you see, these religious leaders here tried at John Humphreys, and they got more than they bargained for.

Look at verse 2. Who gave you the authority to do the things you do, they said? That is such a typical question of religious establishments.

[14:26] Notice they do not ask, does he speak the truth? Is his ministry spiritually fruitful and obviously being blessed by God? Now, what they ask is, does he have a proper license to do this from us?

They don't say, was his cleansing of the temple and his call to repentance right? Was it a true word from God that we should be listening to and responding to? Now, what they said is, has the presbytery authorized this?

Or has the bishop authorized this? Or whatever it might be. Isn't that just so typical of ecclesiastical concerns? Now, maybe, of course, it was because to get into the real issues was just too embarrassing, too close to the bone.

The last thing that ecclesiastical hierarchies want to talk about is actual theology. Some of you will remember a meeting where we saw that ourselves so very clearly, didn't we?

People asked denominational officials, well, what do you say about what the Bible teaches? About marriage and sexuality and so on. What was the answer we got? We're not here to talk about theology.

[15 : 33] Do you remember? All they wanted to discuss was rules and procedures and money and things like that. You see, that is exactly what Luke is showing us here.

And it's the tragic truth that religious institutional idolatry can so easily lead people into misguided loyalty that sees them siding against gospel truth, against gospel people, and against the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

A clash of authorities, a clash of spiritual loyalties. Is it, when push comes to shove, is it really loyalty to the Christ who rules his temple?

Or is it, in fact, loyalty to the temple whose paraphernalia wants to make Christ into the temple's servant? That is such an important question.

And it's a question that needs to be asked all the time today. And it's not just religious establishments that need to ask it, not just liberal establishments.

[16 : 46] It's possible for the very sound and the very orthodox to be just as institutionally high-bound, and often even more so. So, I'm trying to encourage a young minister at the moment who's having a wonderfully fruitful ministry and a growing church, growing in numbers, growing in maturity, but constantly is facing exactly those kind of questions that Jesus was facing here.

Where's your proper authority? You haven't jumped through our institutional hoops. But Jesus is the king who is lord of his temple.

And he will not be put on the spot by such men. Jesus is not the one in the dock. They're the ones in the dock in his temple. And so he fires back in verse 3.

All right then, you tell me about John the Baptist's authority. Was it from God in heaven? Or was it just from man? And with one word, Jesus absolutely snookers them.

Because John's sheer moral authority in the nation was universally recognized right across the nation. Everybody knew this man spoke from God. Just as all true God-given authority is self-authenticating.

[18 : 04] When a man's been chosen by God, when he's been gifted with utterance, when he speaks God's words, not his own words, then people hear the word of God himself with power. He doesn't need to hold up pieces of paper from seminaries and universities and things like that.

Totally unnecessary. When people do do that sort of thing to try and give themselves some credence, people usually don't really find themselves very convinced, do they?

But people saw that John's authority was unmissable. It was from God. Look back to Luke chapter 7, just a few pages, just to see, to remind ourselves.

Jesus speaks there about John and his ministry. Look at verse 24. Jesus says, What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in king's courts. You see, John was an odd figure.

[19 : 10] He had no outwardly impressive authority of credentials or clothes. He had no human authority or splendor like kings or great ones. No. But look at verse 26. What then did you go out to see?

A prophet? Yes. I tell you, I'm more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written. Behold, I sent my messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you.

He was God's messenger to prepare the way for the Lord himself. There could be no greater prophet in the world than that, Jesus says in verse 28. To announce Christ's coming.

And he spoke God's words through the prophet Isaiah. With scriptural authority. Demanding not just that the temple should be cleansed. But that all the people needed to be cleansed and to repent before the Messiah comes.

And of course the people responded en masse. But notice verse 30. Do you see? Not the scribes and the Pharisees. Not the leaders. They rejected God's purpose for themselves.

[20 : 12] They refused John's baptism. Either they didn't believe John or recognize him. Or else they saw that they didn't need to repent like these other mere sinful people.

So come back to chapter 20 verse 5. Jesus, you see, has them absolutely on the spot. If they admitted that indeed John had come with God's authority, then they exposed their own unbelief. But of course if they said that he had no such authority, then verse 6. They were in danger, weren't they, of losing all credibility with the people as religious leaders. Because all the people could see that John manifestly had God's authority.

And so they would be exposed as false prophets to be stoned. And so they're hoist on their own petard. And they plead ignorance.

We don't know, they say. It's just so pathetic, isn't it? But it's just a cloak for their unbelief. But it's so typical of their religious establishment way.

[21 : 18] It'll live with any fudge, any sort of compromise in order to prop up the institution and keep it going. They'll do everything to avoid talking about truth and authority. And just want to keep everything together.

Yes, of course we believe in repentance. In theory. But of course we're a broad church. So we need to keep it all together. So we'll turn a blind eye, Jesus, to this robbery going on in the temple.

And to the heresy in the pulpits. And to the immorality in the bedrooms. And we plead ignorance.

We just don't know. It's all very, very familiar, isn't it?

But how wrong, how foolish. Because Christ's sovereign authority is decisive for his household. For his church.

In these kingdom latter days. And when those who profess to lead God's household. Resist his authority and scorn his lordship over his church.

[22 : 21] Jesus will not enter into negotiations with them for some kind of political settlement. No, Jesus withdraws his word from them.

Verse 8. He became silent. He will not be used by faithless men. That's what Jesus said back in chapter 19, verse 42.

For the people who refused to see. Who would not accept his revelation of peace. Eventually, they could not see. It became hidden from them. Hidden from their eyes.

God's word of life becomes stopped up and unspoken and withdrawn. Then his church will not listen to his authority. That's why so many empty church buildings litter our nation today.

They are monuments to the unbelief of households of God. That have rejected Christ's sovereign authority. Therefore, God has left them to wither and to die.

[23 : 25] Because his spirit has been withdrawn. Because they have forfeited the right any longer to hear his words of life. We need to be clear, friends.

The sovereign Lord of heaven will not cast his pearls before swine. Jesus tells us that himself. And it's a very solemn word, isn't it? To all of us.

To any church that claims the name of Jesus. There is one Lord of the church alone. And he claims total obedience from his household.

And resistance to his rule. Resistance in this kingdom age. Well, it's inexcusable, says Jesus. And yet, Jesus' silence in verse 8 is both eloquent and pregnant.

He doesn't need to answer. Because like John's ministry, his ministry speaks for itself. The people hung on his words of power. The very stones would cry out in praise if these people didn't, Jesus said.

[24 : 26] It was obvious to all but the most perverse and the most twisted that this man was filled with the goodness and grace of God. Remember what Jesus said back in chapter 6?

For no good tree bears bad fruit. Nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree, says Jesus, is known by its fruit.

And the fruit of Jesus' ministry was all around them. But what about the fruit of their ministry? Of God's earthly household Israel.

With all its divine privileges and blessings. With their temple that should have showed the living God to the whole world. What about their fruit? Well, Jesus shows again that he's not on the back foot.

He is not the one in the dock. And in verses 9 to 18, he goes absolutely on the offensive with a devastating parable that everyone there knew was aimed exactly at them.

[25 : 29] And especially at the religious leaders. And as verse 19 says, it made them want to kill him right there on the spot. The religious leaders might have been too afraid to speak the truth.

Wouldn't answer Jesus' question. But Jesus is not afraid. This is a cutting parable. And its message is very plain. And it's this. Christ's sovereign authority over his earthly household will be

demonstrated in this kingdom age of the last days.

When the church of God rejects the sole lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ, judgment is inevitable. God's calling of a people, you see, a household to bear his name in the world, has always been a call with a purpose.

And the purpose is to produce fruit in the world for his glory. It is a call of great grace, a call of great privilege. Moses says that in Deuteronomy 26 verse 18.

It's a call to be people of God's treasured possession. But it also confers great responsibilities. You are to keep all his commands. You are to be a people holy to the Lord, said Moses.

[26 : 45] And Moses taught them back in Deuteronomy chapter 4 that they were to shine the glory of the one true God all the way in the world around. So the people would look at Israel and they would say, what a great God this people must have to have such a wise and understanding people who live like this.

That was their calling. It's what the prophets, like Isaiah, repeated again and again. You are my witnesses. You are the people whom I have formed for myself that you may declare my praises to the world.

Isaiah 43. That's why God chose Israel as his earthly household. And he chose them to be like Isaiah pictures in chapter 5 of his prophecy, to be a beloved vineyard that he tends with great love. And he looks for it to yield grapes. But God said through Isaiah, I looked. And it yielded only wild grapes.

Bitter things. Useless things. You see, for these people who knew the scriptures inside out that Jesus is talking to, there was absolutely no doubt at all what Jesus was talking about and who Jesus was talking about.

[28 : 01] The vineyard owner was God himself. The vineyard is Israel. His household. The tenants are the leaders. The scribes and the priests. They know who Jesus is talking to.

And first of all, Jesus portrays the crime most vividly. Verse 10. When the owner comes first, he looks for fruit. He sends a servant looking for fruit.

And there's none. It's a scandal. But worse than that, the servant he sends is beaten and abused shamefully and cast out. And notice how it goes on.

The rebellion getting progressively worse and worse. And yet, the owner keeps sending servants. What patience. What patience. What grace he shows. Until verse 13.

Surely, knowing the risks. Knowing the history. Still, he sends his own son. Notice, his beloved son.

[28 : 58] Saying, perhaps they will respect him. What astonishing grace and patience. Would you have done that? Imagine Jesus piercing eyes.

As he spoke these words to those people. Look at verse 14. What a picture of sheer hatred. And of utter irrationality.

In the hearts of sinful people. To seek to destroy the one nearest and dearest to the heart of the great Lord and Master. There's something so deeply twisted in that, isn't there?

I wonder if that's why you find that people who are secular. People who don't for a moment have a thought for God and Christ and the gospel. Why so often they seem to like to swear, to profane by using the name of Jesus.

I wonder if it's just some kind of innate, visceral hatred deep in the human heart for the beloved son of God. It seems to be what it is here. But how can they imagine that they can get away with the crime?

[30 : 08] And how can it possibly, possibly benefit them as they seem to think in verse 14? Let's kill him and then everything will be ours. Kill Jesus. Get rid of God's son.

And then we'll get everything we want in life. It's utterly absurd, isn't it? And yet, isn't that how so many people seem to think today?

If only we could get rid of Jesus. If only we could get rid of his cursed presence. His authority. His church. His words. Then we'd all be free. Get the Bibles out of the hotel rooms.

Get the Bibles out of the classrooms. Get the Bibles out of the room. Get the Bibles out of the room. Get the Bibles out of the room. But friends, that song is a song as old as the world, isn't it? Let's get rid of the owner of this beautiful garden.

Let's silence him and then it will be ours to do everything we want in our way. We've been singing that song since the Garden of Eden, haven't we? But Jesus' parable shows just how absurd and how deranged, how mad the human heart can really become when it rejects the lordship of the

creator and the ruler of this world.

[31 : 21] And so Jesus spells out very solemnly, having given us the crime, the consequences of such a deep-seated rebellion from the household of God on earth.

Verse 19. Verse 15. What will the owner do to them? Nothing. You think judgment is inconceivable? Verse 16 suggests that is exactly what they thought. Oh, surely no such thing. But what a miscalculation of utterly colossal proportions that is.

Look at verse 16. Judgment is as inescapable as it is inevitable for a people who reject his lordship. Christ's sovereign authority will be demonstrated against the earthly household that bears his name and yet causes his name to be blasphemed and not praised in the world.

[32 : 22] Read Romans chapter 2. There will be a destruction, says Jesus, of these tenants. Verse 16. Just as Jesus had said in chapter 19, as he'll say again in chapter 21, the whole religious apparatus of their temple will be absolutely destroyed.

And there'll be a deprivation of their privileged calling. He will give that vineyard to others who will produce fruit. His household on earth will pass away from the most part from Israel and be given over to Gentiles who will produce fruit for his name all over the world.

That's what he's saying. The people couldn't believe it. Surely not. Surely God would never judge us like that. Look at verse 17.

Jesus fixes them with his eye. And he says, this is not just my word. This is God's holy word from your own scriptures. They tell you this.

And he quotes from Psalm 118 that they'd been singing earlier, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But that psalm also speaks, doesn't it, of the king's rejection by the builders, by those who should have been building God's eternal temple.

[33 : 42] And they reject him. And yet it speaks also of his vindication. That he is not given over to death, but arises as the chief cornerstone of the whole of God's building, of his true temple, the everlasting household, of all who belong to him through faith in Jesus Christ in this kingdom age of the last days.

And so you see, to round off Jesus' word to them, he gives them, in verse 18, a challenge from their own scriptures. For those scriptures gave the same warning as Jesus himself has just given.

When a people are confronted with the last and greatest messenger of the covenant, the beloved son, God's king, there are only two possible outcomes. Either they recognize him as Lord, as the cornerstone of salvation, long awaited.

And they fall on him, so that he breaks their pride and shatters their rebellion. And they enter his true household as they bow to his unique and true authority. He is the cornerstone.

Or, says Jesus, if they reject him as the Lord, if they reject him as the true foundation stone of all God's purposes for this world, then he will crush them in judgment.

[35 : 02] they will be destroyed and dispossessed. Look at verse 18. Do you remember Daniel's dream in chapter 2 of his prophecy of that vivid depiction of the stone not hewn by human hands that will smash and crush every authority of man set up and opposed to the kingdom of the Son of Man?

It's the same message. Christ's sovereign authority over his earthly household will be demonstrated in this kingdom age.

Either he will be the cornerstone, either he will be the sole authority over everything and everyone. Or, he must become the crushing stone, the one who will destroy, and destroy, notice, especially those who cloak their religious unbelief and their rebellion under some kind of ecclesiastical office. And Jesus will pass their privileges over to others who will bear fruit because they will bow to his authority. And that's why, lastly, you see, we shouldn't be surprised at verse 19, which ends this story.

that Christ's sovereign authority will prove divisive in his earthly household throughout this kingdom age of the last days. Verse 19 tells us that the religious leaders were enraged.

[36 : 37] They sought to lay hands on him at once to destroy him as they'd already decided to do. They knew Jesus was against them and they sure as heck were against him. But they feared the people.

The people were still hanging on Jesus' words. Some at least, many indeed, were gladly bowing to his lordship over their lives. And you see, division is always inevitable when Christ's lordship and rule is pressed home in his earthly household.

When the word of God is not just fired aimlessly off into the ether from the pulpit in pious platitudes, but when it's actually targeted and pressed home into the life of God's household.

When, as Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3, when he writes to the church in Ephesus and calls it God's institution, when he says, I'm writing to tell you how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

You see, when Christ's authority tells us in his church, we must stop doing this and we must start doing that and we must stop saying this and we must start saying that. When the gospel becomes the force that actually dictates how we do things and how we must change things and how we must repent for things in the church, how we must run things, what we must spend our money on, and all the things that concern the eyes of the church.

[38 : 07] When Christ's authority demands to hold sway over his church and over our lives, there will be opposition, there will be division because some will be humbled and will bow the knee in a new way in loving devotion to the authority of Christ.

But others will be hardened to raise their voice, perhaps even raise their fists in resentment, in opposition. But all such opposition will be futile in the end.

Jesus knew that God's plan and purpose was unstoppable. Indeed, all of their efforts to reject him in this world only ensured his triumph and his victory. It was through their very hatred and rebellion against him and opposition to him that would take him to the cross where he won his great victory, where his enemies were defeated, where his true temple was cleansed and changed forever.

Evil can only ever be self-defeating and opposition to the Lordship of Christ can only ever be self-defeating in the end. And that ought to encourage us together as a church as well as in our own lives and Christian witnesses.

He should put steel into us too because if we're truthfully teaching and living the true gospel of Christ's Lordship, we will see division.

[39 : 43] We will. We can't avoid it. There will be resistance to the absolute rule of Christ from vested interests in the human heart, in our own hearts and others.

There are battles raging, aren't there, for control there all the time. But we'll also see it from vested interests in the household of God. And battles will always rage for control there too in his church.

There will be divisions provoked by the rule of the real Jesus Christ. And friends, we need to make sure that we're not on the side challenging his authority.

We're not the ones asserting vested interests of our own. remember Christ's sovereign authority is decisive for his household in this kingdom age.

Resistance to him is inexcusable. And we need to remember that his sovereign authority will be demonstrated in this age over churches, over households that reject his lordship.

[40 : 48] And that must be a clear warning to all of us today, every one of us and every church. A clear warning to every church that claims Jesus is lord.

The purpose of his household, the church, is to bear fruit through being true pillars and buttresses of his true gospel. And if a church, a congregation, a grouping, a denomination, however privileged its history, however great its position, however great its name, if it proves fruitless and rebellious and scorns that authority, well, what will the owner of the vineyard do to them, says Jesus?

According to Jesus, he will destroy them and pass their commission to others. Or in other language, he will take away their lampstand of witness and come against them with the sword of his mouth.

As Jesus said to the churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 2 and 3. Those churches, by the way, are now long buried, aren't they, under the sands of time?

Presumably, they didn't take the word of Jesus very seriously and thought he would never judge them. Surely not. What about the church in the Western world today? With all its privileges, all its history, all the provision that we've had from God?

[42 : 10] Has God's Spirit moved away east and south to the teeming millions of Southeast Asia and South America and Africa?

Is he giving the vineyard that was once ours to bear fruit into others? When you look around at the historic denominations in the West today, in this country, in the States, in Europe, becoming quite hard not to think so, isn't it?

Will our land become like Asia Minor, North Africa, Turkey, the Middle East today? Once a flaming torch of gospel truth for the world, reading the Acts of the Apostles, but now turned to darkness for centuries and centuries?

Surely not. Surely not. That's what we want to say too, isn't it? But just like in verse 17, I think Jesus looks us in the eye too.

Fixes us with his gaze and says, that's what the Scriptures promise if the king who is lord of his temple is rejected and ejected from his household.

[43 : 32] If his writ is ignored and his rule is scorned. It's very solemn, isn't it? None of us dare presume on the grace of God.

No person who calls himself a Christian. No church calls itself a Christian church. He will demonstrate his sovereign authority both in blessing and in judgment.

because Jesus is lord. Lord of his church on earth. Lord of our lives here on earth.

He alone has power and authority, splendor and dignity. So friends, God is saying to us today, bow to his mastery.

Jesus is lord. Jesus is lord. Let's pray. Our father, we thank you that you are a God who speaks to us not in riddles but in plain truth.

[44 : 48] We thank you that you are a God of grace who warns us for our blessing and for our good. So help us, we pray, to be those who hang upon your words, who receive your words and who fall upon you as the great cornerstone, the lord of our lives and the lord of the church.

Guard us, keep us, we pray, under your great and gracious sovereign rule. until the lord jesus comes again.

And may we be a people who bear fruit in your vineyard and so bring pleasure to your heart and blessing to this world. For we ask it in jesus name.

Amen. Amen.