

Jesus - the Great I Am

by Harry Foster

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of recognizing our spiritual emptiness and the transformative power of experiencing Jesus as the Great I Am in our lives.

Duration: 53:52

Topics: "Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having faith in the Lord as the 'I am.' He references several verses from the Gospel of John where Jesus declares himself as the bread of life, the light of the world, the resurrection, and the 'I am.' The speaker highlights the need for deep inward knowledge and vital faith in order to truly know and experience Jesus as the source of light and life. The disciples' inadequate knowledge and fear are contrasted with the Lord's ability to provide and satisfy all needs.

Transcript

The gospel by John, first of all, chapter 6, verse 35, Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. Then chapter 9, verse 5, when I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Chapter 11, verse 25, Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life.

And then chapter 13, verse 19, John 13, 19, from henceforth I tell you, before it come to pass, that when it come to pass, ye may believe that I am. How important it is to have faith in the Lord as the I am. How essential to know him as the I am.

I tell you, he said to his disciples, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe. How essential also it is for us to be led into experiencing which happens. And when they happen, we find that what we had told, had been told, has become really inward, knowledge, vital faith.

We have here three of the statements of the Lord, I am the bread of life. It's only when it comes to pass that you really believe that he is. I am the light of the world.

It seems to me that the essential setting for those words was this condition of the man about whom they were spoken, who was in darkness if ever a man was. I am the resurrection and the life. How much the two sisters at Bethany had been told by the Lord Jesus.

And how readily one at least of them had accepted and sought to believe what she had been told. But it wasn't till it came to pass that the belief became that inward knowledge. Ye may believe that I am.

How can we know the Lord in this way as being the reality, the answer, the fullness of every aspect of the will of God. Well I think the first necessary part of such learning is to find, to discover that we are not. I am from the Lord means we are not.

Look at this example, the man who stands as the great proof that Jesus is the light, the light of the world. He was absolutely in the dark. If he had been asked to say before the change what his state was, altering the verses, the words of verse 25, he would have said whereas others see I am blind.

Whatever light there is I have none of it. I never had light. And apart from Christ I never shall have light.

I am the one in darkness. That's essential. That's not only true of the sinner who must confess his absolute need before he can see light and life in Christ.

It's true of all spiritual experience as we are being trained to discover the true nature of the Lord. To believe I am, you have to find out, and it's a bitter and humiliating experience maybe, to find out how completely otherwise we are, always have been, for he was born blind, always shall be. For this is a matter of nature.

The Lord has the positive answer. And how positive it is in comparison with the futile reasoning of the disciples who when they first saw him began to raise this question as to the origin, the explanation, the cause. It was a completely negative discussion they were entering on.

There was no answer to it. There was no remedy if the answer were found. And how negative so much of our curiosity, questioning, and reasoning about the cause of things can be.

In other people and in ourselves. It's the facts that matter, but the facts brought alongside of the Lord Jesus who is the answer. There were men, in this very chapter we are told of them, who never found that the Lord was the light.

Never came to know him in this way. And the reason, the reason very simple, that they thought they had light. They were unwilling to discover or to be told how complete was their natural darkness.

You find their arguing with the man takes this form. They say, we know that God has spoken by Moses. We know.

All right, if you know, you won't find that the Lord Jesus is the light. Later on they said to him, thou wast altogether born in sin. Dost thou teach us? All right.

You're not prepared to be taught. Never will know. Jesus is the light.

So that's the first thing in our discovery of the great I Am. A fresh discovery that we are not. Alongside of that goes another perhaps more surprising but equally essential discovery that other people are not.

We thought they were. Go to the wilderness where the people having listened to the Lord Jesus are hungry. And you find in the center of that great multitude a little group of men, the twelve, who would assume certain measure of importance because they were after all the chosen apostles.

Who would no doubt be looked up to by at least some of the crowd. Who would feel, well, if they were in difficulty, there was always Peter and always John and always the others. And you find that the story reveals the twelve disciples to be as utterly bankrupt as the rest of the multitude.

They had nothing. The crowd are found out in their hunger of their emptiness. But those to whom they would look and perhaps upon whom they had begun to rest and rely are found out in the real test to be just as helpless and as hopeless.

It's a bitter discovery but a very necessary one that everybody else but the Lord Jesus is a failure. And when we begin to rely on one another as apart from him, on men as men, the Lord will take pain to reveal to us, to cause us to know the frailty, the unsatisfactory nature of that in which we were trusted. Many Christians are apt to be out with the Lord just because they find that others whom they considered reliable are after all not perfect.

That's no excuse for any of us not to seek to be examples for the rest. But make no mistake about it. It's part of this deep, hard discovery of the absolute satisfying fullness of Jesus Christ to be disappointed with everything else.

That's how it happens with them. The Lord Jesus took trouble to impress them with this. Notice in the three gospels how at the time of need he turned to the twelve and said Give ye them to eat.

Now the Lord doesn't play or talk lightly over any matter. In John's gospel we are told, he said to them, When shall we buy bread for this great multitude? Even though he knew what he was doing. Not to tease but surely to underline and emphasize this.

The greatest servants of the Lord are in themselves empty. They are not. There is only one I am.

Thank God for him. The Jews, or some of them, discussing that experience in the wilderness felt that Moses could provide some sort of answer to human need. And so when the matter of the bread of life was brought up they said to the Lord Jesus, Our Father is at the manor in the wilderness.

The Lord immediately answered that one, It was not Moses. It was not Moses. It came through Moses.

But it was not Moses. When you come to think of it, it's rather pathetic. Long, long while ago, the manor came down in the wilderness.

And all that they can produce now in this time of present need and challenge is a pathetic harking back to the past. Moses gave you not that bread, but even if he had, it's a past thing. Now you will notice if you follow John 6, how from that very verse, the Lord Jesus again and again makes the strongest emphasis on the present.

And the present continuous. Moses gave you not that bread out of heaven, but my Father give it. The Lord avoided saying my Father gave you the bread out of heaven, though he did.

But that's past. And we are talking about the I am. I am, my Father give it.

I am the bread. He that cometh, he that believeth. And so again and again as the chapter goes on, there's mounting up this reminder that the Lord Jesus is the ever-present answer to the need.

And so we discover, first of all, that we're not. And then that nobody else is. And that all the past will never be sufficient for the present moment.

And we will find, and here we come to John 11, that even our previous knowledge of the Lord is not sufficient. I am is the one from where to know. Not I was, not I used to be, though praise be his name, he's the same always.

But ye will believe, the Lord says, when you've been through this experience, you'll come to know me and to believe me as the I am. And that means that all our previous knowledge of the Lord will be insufficient, deliberately so, by God's own intention, because we are to be brought into a new, fuller experience of the I am. After all, it's here that we find the Lord's affirmation, I am the resurrection and the life.

And resurrection always means coming up into a new realm. Martha and Mary, Mary in particular, had very real knowledge of the Lord. But they had to come up into a new realm, to them a strange realm, and it was a painful experience.

But when it was accomplished, they were found on higher ground with the Lord. How do we discover that the Lord is the I am? Seems to me it's absolutely essential that for this we shall be plunged into experiences which are the opposite of what he is. There's no other way of learning that Jesus is the bread of life than to be really starving in the wilderness.

After all, the Lord precipitated that. They had followed him. They had listened to him.

It might have been argued, and quite correctly, that he could have sent them away earlier, that this never need have arisen. No, from one point of view that's quite right. It need not have been.

But from the spiritual point of view, if they are to know him, it had to be. And how much can be said of our lives like that? That the Lord takes us and brings us into circumstances that need not have been. We could have seen, we could see, surely he can, we can see how it could have been avoided.

If we had been the Lord, we never would have let ourselves or anybody else get into that quandary. It need not have been. Ah, but from the Lord's sight it had to be.

This is the only way. And I'm quite sure that the blind man, once he really found the Lord, had the answer to a question that had been nagging him all through his years, why did it have to be me? Why did it have to be this way? Well, there is no other way. For the light to become dark, for the way to become so obscure that we have no answer to, to have perhaps as he had, questioning people saying, why has this happened to him? If he hadn't sinned, or his parents hadn't sinned, if there hadn't been fault or failure somewhere, he would never have been in this predicament.

That's human reason. The Lord has a very different approach. This has been ordered in the providence of the Father and brought to this very moment in the will of God in order that it may be demonstrated, I am, I am the light.

And so, for that death in Bethany, that was the problem for the sisters, for they felt strongly and the Jews around were heard discussing this very point that surely this need never have been. Lazarus need not have died. That home in Bethany could have been preserved from the breaking in of the destroyer, from the collapse that had seemed to come, from the overwhelming disaster that met it.

The Lord could have held it off. He could have covered them, sheltered them, made it unnecessary. Yes, he could.

But if he had, they would have missed the supreme discovery of Jesus Christ that awaited them. Jesus loved Martha, his sister and Lazarus. And it's the love of God that produces circumstances that seem at the time to be overwhelmingly disastrous.

But that's the way. It's the only way. How can you know that Jesus is the light unless death has encamped upon him? How can you know he's the light unless really in a deep inward way you are and you've brought right up to the fact that you have no light in yourself and can get none apart from him? How can you know him as the bread of life except you find yourself led into some wilderness and that coming upon you which is hunger for which there's no human answer, no money to buy and no place to buy if there were money? The Lord Jesus is waiting for he knows.

He knows what he will do. Now look at the inadequacy of the knowledge that so far seems to have taken this Bethany group along. Think of the disciples first.

When the Lord announced that he was going to Bethany, they were frightened. They thought he would die if he went there. They tried to keep him away.

And yet this was the end of the Lord's ministry practically. They had seen Jairus' daughter raised from the dead. They had seen the son of the widow of Nain brought back to life.

They had seen the Lord taken to the brow of the hill at Nazareth passing through the midst of them going on his own way. They had seen the murderous attempts on him and how supremely indifferent he was to them. They had seen the clashes with death from which he always emerged victorious.

And yet here they are. And they say he goes to Bethany. For one thing Lazarus is dead so it's no use going.

And for another thing death awaits him there. Well, says Thomas. He's got a big heart, says Thomas, in spite of all his doubts.

Let us also go that we may die with him. Doesn't look, does it? As though all the teachings, all the experiences that they have really made them to know Jesus as the great I Am. But we pass then to think of the two sisters.

Here's Martha. Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming we are told, ran out to meet him. Which shows that she had an attitude toward the Lord of some expectancy, seeking him.

She felt she knew him. And in a time of need he was the one to run to. Moreover, not only did she meet him and bring this question about what would have happened if he had been there, but she added a little bit of her own It's very true and very wonderful knowledge that it was she confessed.

Verse 22, Even now, she said, I know that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. That is, I should imagine, a very strong and clear understanding of the nature of Jesus. Moreover, when the Lord Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life, not I shall be, but I am, he challenged her, Believest thou this? The answer she gave was, Yes Lord, I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God.

And yet, as you know so well, when they came to the grave and the stone lay against it, Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha was the one who said, No, never. Keep the stone there, it's too late, it's open.

It only goes to show that the knowledge which she had of the Lord didn't really work when it came to the actual challenge. And in that she is typical of most of us. I know, yes we know, I have believed, yes we have believed.

And the Lord takes us up to some tomb and says, Well, now we're going to pull the stone out. And we can't believe when it really comes to something which is a practical test of his being the I Am. The other sister, Mary, this is the one you remember who sat at his feet and heard his word.

The one who was given that better part, or rather chose the better part, and was promised it should not be taken away from her. Mary wouldn't even go to the Lord. Martha, soon as she heard, went and met him, but Mary sat still in the house.

Now whether the Lord Jesus actually called Mary, I suppose he did, for Martha wouldn't tell an untruth. But at any rate, it was Martha's persuasion that brought Mary out. She went away and called Mary secretly, saying the Master is here, and call us in.

At any rate, Jesus had to call her. Thank him. Had to call her before she would go to him.

When he came to her, verse 32, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus, therefore, saw her, that was when he wept. Makes a strange story in a way, doesn't it? Someone who had sat at his feet, drunk in his word, laid hold of them, believed them, laughed at them, and now here she is in the depths of despair.

It may be argued that Martha's was a more superficial temperament, and she ran out, and Mary's a deeper one, I think it was. She was cut to the heart. She felt she knew the Lord, and now she found she didn't.

She had implicit confidence in his love, and now love seemed to her faithful. Like that. In a sense, it has to be like that.

For here are examples of this tremendous truth, that however much we know of the Lord, he is bound in his quest, drawing us on to a full knowledge of him. He is bound to bring us into new trials and new problems, where all our previous knowledge is not enough. It doesn't mean to say that we should lose faith, that we should be offended with the Lord, but it does mean to say that the Lord knows what he's doing.

With a multitude who are hungry, yes, and with a Martha and a Mary who are brokenhearted, he knows what he is doing. And what is he doing? Bringing them to the place whereby an experience deeper than they've ever had before, bigger than they've ever had before, more impossible than they ever could have conceived of, in that experience, they shall make the glad discovery, after all, the Lord is enough. I am.

It's worth it. The people that were caught out hungry in the wilderness afterwards said it was worth it. It was worth it.

The blind man, I'm quite convinced, for the rest of his life went around saying, hallelujah, it was worth it. And I believe so in a deeper way because it was a deeper experience. Lazarus and Martha, yes, and Mary, would look at one another in bed and say, it was bitter, but it was worth it.

It brought a new discovery of the Lord. These things that I told you, the Lord says, before it comes to pass. But when it comes to pass, and it will, dear friends, if you mean business with the Lord, it will come to pass.

This is the only way we really learn of Him. I have told you before it comes to pass that when it comes to pass, ye may believe. I would like to say ye may discover that I am the Lord's bringer into ever fuller knowledge of the fullness of His love.

The first book of the Kings, chapter 10, and when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove Him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bear spices, and very much gold and precious stones. When she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

And Solomon told her all her questions. There was not anything hid from the King which he told her not. And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her.

And she said to the King, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom. Albeit I believed not the words until I came and mine eyes had seen it. And behold, the hearth was not told me Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

Happy are thy men. Happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee. And here thy wisdom.

What a happy thing to be in the house of the King. In this house there was no question as to who was King. Solomon was supreme in every matter.

It was very much his house. But the Queen of Sheba, herself a rich woman, as the story discloses, and obviously one with a position of her own, could only envy anybody who had a place in that house. Happy are thy men.

Never let people have to pity us because Jesus is King. They ought to envy us. And the place of his kingship is supremely in his house.

Now the Queen of Sheba did not come to see the house of Solomon. She came to see Solomon. And the house of Solomon has no meaning unless you meet Solomon in it.

But evidently it was the house of Solomon or rather the Solomon in his house which so overwhelmed her. She'd heard about it. She'd heard of how wonderful it is to meet this great King in his house.

And now she says, they didn't tell me how. Not because they wouldn't, but because they couldn't. There are no words to express.

There is no means by which mere reports can convey the blessedness, the wonder of being gathered together in spiritual fellowship with Christ on the throne in the midst. That is God's pattern and conception for his people. Happy are those doubly happy are those who can find a place where thus the Lord is known and met.

When she had seen all the wisdom of Solomon that was the thing that first of all and supremely impressed her. She came, and men do come with hard questions. Not frivolous questions, not theoretical questions.

She was a woman of responsibility and life was too much for her and problems were too great and she hadn't the answer and nobody else had the answer. And she came into this house and she found the answer. It should always be like that.

This is what it says about Solomon's wisdom. God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much and largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt for he was wiser than all men than Ethan, the Ezraite, and Heman, and Calchol, and Dada.

We don't know who they all were. But you know what it is to have the great names, don't you? The names of the people who are the authority. And you know what it is to be disappointed when you've got a real heart need that none of them can answer.

Solomon's wisdom was not only greater, it was different. But all this wisdom of the children of the East and of Egypt didn't come from this world at all. It didn't come from Solomon.

It came from God. And that's the first thing that I would say to characterize every representation of the house of the Lord that people may come with their hard questions and find in Jesus Christ the answer. Always the answer.

It goes on to say, speaking of this wisdom of Solomon, and he spake three thousand proverbs. It was practical wisdom. It just came right down to everyday life.

Whether you ever read these questions that people send up to religious papers, they're nearly always theoretical questions. What is the meaning of this and that and the other? Who'll be saved and who won't? All sorts of theoretical questions. They used to try that on the Lord Jesus, you know.

But he always turned it to something very personal. They began to talk about those Galileans whose blood on Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. And the Lord says, Except you, Ripper, you shall all likewise perish.

They asked him, Lord, are there many that be saved? He said, You strive to enter into the straight gate. The disciples tried it. They said, Lord, did this man sin or his parents that he was born blind? And the Lord said, Neither.

Let's be practical. Here's an opportunity for God to show his power and for us to work the works of God. So when the Queen of Sheba came, I don't know whether she heard any of these proverbs, but this was the kind of wisdom that she heard.

The wisdom that meets us. As these proverbs, some of which are recorded, do. In the practical, daily affairs of ordinary life, telling us what is right and what is wrong, what is wise and what is foolish.

Three thousand proverbs. And moreover, it says, His songs were a thousand and five. You notice he began with the proverbs.

Didn't want any empty singing. There's a lot of singing that's empty, that doesn't come out of practical experience. True wisdom says, Let's be practical first and the song will arise out of the proverb.

He had to write those songs when he'd written the proverbs that people should be able to give expression to how wonderful and blessed and gracious it is to prove the will of God in everyday life. Heartwarming wisdom, as well as practical wisdom. He spoke, so it tells us, of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.

He spake also of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and of fishes. He seemed to know the meaning of everything. And that everything had a meaning.

And that is how we find the wisdom of God in the Lord Jesus. Showing that every part of our life and every detail has a meaning. And if it hasn't got a meaning, he'll put a meaning into it for it.

So great is his wisdom. Solomon told her all her questions. There was not anything hid from the king which he told her not.

So, did the Queen of Sheba meet King Solomon in his house? And so I believe, should men and women meet Christ today in his house. That's what the house is for. Secondly, the meat of his table.

May I read just a verse or two about that? And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour and three score measures of meal, ten fat oxen and twenty oxen out of the pastures and a hundred sheep beside harts and gazelles and roebucks and patted fowl. My, they feasted, didn't they? It was a feast that she found in Solomon's house. A real feast.

But they didn't feast for the sake of feasting. These were his servants that feasted. They feasted to get strength.

If you've got three thousand proverbs you need some strength. And if you've got a thousand and five songs to sing you need strength to sing them. Blessed be God.

His Solomons don't give you proverbs and send you away with them. Give you the proverbs and then gives you some strength, some nourishment so that they should be fulfilled. And that is what the house of God is for.

For men to feast and to know that they feasted and found strength to do the will of God. Remember how the Lord Jesus stressed this to Peter? Feed my sheep, feed my lambs. Do you remember how the Apostle Paul stressed it to the elders from Ephesus when he called to Miley? That they were to take care to feed the Church of God which he had purchased with his own blood.

God wants his children to be fed, not starved. And the pity of it is there's so little food among the people of God today. Solomon's provision was a daily provision.

You never caught him on an off day. Never had to go away and say it was all right last week we hope it'll be all right next week but it's been pretty lean today. Day by day the fullness and the fatness were brought out and men feasted on it.

That's what the house was for. That men might meet the King in the house and sit down at the table with the King and go out fortified as well as rejoiced. The food was nourishing food, you notice.

The Lord believes in nourishment not stimulants. You can get stimulants from the word of God and go out with a tremendous excitement to do his will but stimulants have an unhappy way of losing their power all too quickly and very often of bringing a depression which was almost worse than before you had the

stimulant. Food, assimilated and digested gives something permanent to the life.

In his house, abundance of food. The meat of his table, happy are thy men, happy are thy servants. What a table and what a table we have in Christ.

What richness to feed upon. And the sitting of his servants, the sitting of his servants, not the sitting of the people who did nothing, not the sitting around of the drones or the spectators. I doubt whether they existed in Solomon's house and they ought not to exist in Christ's house.

We're all servants. But they're sitting down, no wonder. She's overwhelmed, she's never seen it like this.

There's an atmosphere of calm, of peace, the sitting of his servants. The restfulness, the poise, the serenity. This is not a scene of fevered activity though it is the very center and headquarters of the administration of this kingdom.

These are not only workers, these are the most important workers, but there's an element of restfulness about them. As indeed there was in the whole kingdom, for this is what it says, Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba. That's what the prophets always dreamed about, every man under his vine and his fig tree.

It happened. The dream came true in Solomon's day. Why this peace, this rest, this assurance? Ah, you've got to get behind Solomon to know that.

Solomon sits on a throne which is the fruit of the victory of his great father. All the mighty triumphs of David, the warrior, are now vested in Solomon, the administrator. Two men in Old Testament types, because no one man could fulfill the type.

But it is fulfilled in one man, our greater than David, in the fullness of his victory, is also the greater than Solomon, on the throne of his glory. No place for a fuss and bustle and rush and strain of petty servants here. Every one of them fulfills his service in the calm and strength and assurance that comes from the king, whose very name I speak.

And God's idea of peace is never pacific. His idea of peace is progress without friction, activity without fuss. The sitting of his servants.

I would like, if people came in to the house of the Lord where I was once a servant, that they should be impressed by the sitting of his servants. And the standing or the attendance of his ministers. It's another side of the picture.

There's an alertness, there's a readiness, a quickness, to know the will of the king here. The standing of his ministers. Of course, obviously, some were sitting and some were standing.

But in the spiritual counterpart, we must be both sitting and standing. Sitting in restful enjoyment of Christ. Standing in alert readiness of obedience to Christ.

Alas, so often there's too much sitting. And when the king wants something, the question of whether anybody's going to get up and rather slow, laboured, rising up. But not so in Solomon's house.

She's impressed by the fact that everybody's on the alert. Only to know his will, and they will do it. What a blessed house that must have been.

And what a blessed house it is when it is full of people who are only wanting to know the will of God. And are ready to do it. The standing of his ministers.

And their apparel. As a dignity and a glory. Even when they're doing the service.

Nothing shabby in the house of Solomon. God grant that there may be nothing shabby in the house of the Lord. There should not be.

There's a meanness which is unworthy of him. There is that which might be more or less, indeed is, the natural apparel that we would have apart from him. But when they came into Solomon's service, that was left behind.

With his service they put on apparel which spoke of his dignity. The dignity of Christ, marking every one of them. Doesn't say that it was a uniform.

Doesn't say that they all looked the same. I'm pretty sure it wasn't. In any case there's no place for uniform in the house of the Lord.

But everyone should bear that which in their own way and their own realm says more loudly than words can say, not I, but Christ. Not what I am, but what he is. Their apparel.

I was reading, we were reading in our reading at home this morning. Romans 13, I think it's verse 14. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

No wonder it was a glorious house when all this was true. No wonder there was no more spirit in her. She'd never seen anything like this.

And dear friends, every representation of the house of the Lord should be something that men have never seen anywhere else, nor can see. So full should it be of that which speaks of Christ. And his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord.

It seems that he had a special way, covered way, which led directly from his house up into the temple. She was impressed by that. His ascension.

Vast as this house was, full of a multiplicity of people and things and activities, it all led upward into the house of the Lord. The tendency was upwards all the time. Perhaps we can understand that more clearly if we think of the opposite, of how sadly possible it is that even the things of God can be brought down.

And in what is called the house of the Lord, the personalities and the envies and strifes and jealousies and pettinesses of men can drag the things of God down. There were kings later on, successors of this very man, who did that. Took the holy things and used them for their own end.

And there was one King Ahab, at your leisure you may read about him, in 2 Kings 16, 18. And it says he took some of the riches from among, from the house of the Lord, took them away, put the labour down, from off its lions onto the ground, and it says he turned this special entry that King Solomon had made, he turned it round. Now what that means, you can think about it, 2 Kings 16, 18.

What he did actually, apparently was somehow or other to close that entrance. But it's quite obvious what he and others did spiritually. Instead of having everything leading up to the house of the Lord, they had things coming down to themselves, turning them round.

It's sadly possible. It's all too common. But it's not like that where the Lord is truly Lord.

It's not like that when his people are truly forming a house by the Spirit, for his indwelling and his glory. It's all the other way round. It's an ascent.

It's a movement upwards. It's constant progress. Things coming back to God, up to God.

Everything apparently in Solomon's house pointed this way to the house of God. The margin says, his burnt offerings which he offered. Well that only underlines the fact that this house was held not for man but for God.

And all its richness and value came up in service to God. And sweet fragrance and pleasing sacrifice to God. What would Solomon have a house for if not for that? What has Christ a house for if not for that? That he supremely among us should be all the time turning things Godward.

Making all the potential value and all the suffering and all the circumstances of life making them as something which can be offered as a pure offering to satisfy the Father. Well that's what the Queen of Sheba found. She was overwhelmed.

She said, nobody's ever told me that it's like this. She was envious. She said a queen might envy the humblest servant in that house.

She was overwhelmed. She thought she was rich. But when she came there she found her riches were but a tiny contribution to a vast wealth.

Oh, that the house of the Lord might be found among us and in many other places after this one. And that the Lord might be so met in his house for his needs.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23991.mp3>

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