

# Pilgrims Problems No. 17 the Rock Which Followed

by Willie Mullan

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*Willie Mullan's sermon explores the spiritual significance of the rock that followed the Israelites, emphasizing its typological connection to Christ and the importance of careful biblical interpretation.*

**Duration:** 55:03

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1

**Topics:** "Prophecy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on his 26 and a half years of preaching about Christ. He emphasizes the importance of always talking about Christ and seeking God's blessing for the future. The preacher uses the analogy of a parade to illustrate the order and significance of different elements in the Bible, such as the Lord Mayor's coach, army tanks, and Queen's Island workmen. He expresses gratitude to the attendees, some of whom have been with him since the beginning, and asks for their prayers as he enters a new phase of life.

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## Transcript

But this is my last Bible class in this place. I'm retiring, leaving. I've been 26 years here, just a little bit over, almost 27.

And for all those years I've worked very hard for the class. Harder than any of you just anticipate now. Working sometimes at four in the morning, sometimes away on to two in the morning.

And I don't want to go into all the things, but you know I've taken you through in those years all the great prophetic chapters of the Bible. Daniel, Revelation and so on, and happenings ahead. And I've taken you through all the typical things, like the high priest's garments and the tabernacle.

And the devotional things while we talked about the footsteps of Christ. And the evangelical things which I loved most of all when we talked about the meaning of the cross. And the historical things when we dealt for about 130 weeks with the book of Genesis.

Oh, I don't need to go on and remind you. And it's good for me to look down this class this evening. And some of you were there at the beginning.

And you're here now. Mr. Carson at the back was there. When I began he's here still.

And a few more, bless you. Some of you were not born when I began here. You're coming up now as young students.

I want to thank you for all the support and everything. And as I launch into a new life completely, maybe in your spare moments you would ask the Lord to bless me. That's all I ask of you.

And I thank you for everything. Trust that God will bless you. Now we must get on with the business.

Without this final pilgrim's problem this evening. That rock which followed them. And I want you to see the reading of this.

It's in 1 Corinthians. And it's chapter 10 please. First letter to the Corinthians.

And it's the 10th chapter. And Paul writing to these believers in Corinth said, Moreover brethren. And the way he stresses the word moreover.

He wants them to know just a little bit more about something. And you can see that it is believers he's dealing with. He says moreover brethren.

I would not that ye should be ignorant. And he was always after this for the children of God. That they would not be in any way.

In any of the great doctrines of the word of God. That they would not be ignorant. He says moreover brethren.

I would not that ye should be ignorant. How that all our fathers were under the cloud. And all passed through the sea.

And I think it's good for me to stop to tell you. That when he said all our fathers. He was sort of emphasizing the hour in a special way.

He was talking to the Corinthians. The saints that he had won for Christ at Corinth. Gentiles they were.

And so as he says moreover brethren. I would not that ye should be ignorant. That all our fathers.

Sort of points to himself I'm a Jew. And this was a Jew talking to the Gentiles. Saved Jew of course.

But he was reminding the Corinthians. That all our Jewish fathers. That's the idea I want you to get.

All our fathers. All our fathers were under the cloud. And that's the pillar of cloud that led them.

Right out of Egypt of course. How that all our fathers were under the cloud. And all passed through the sea.

And I think I almost need to draw this for you. You see when God redeemed them. By the blood of the lamb.

And brought them out of Egypt by a mighty hand. Yea God saved them through power and through blood. And when God brought them to the Red Sea.

You remember how he opened a way for them. Yes God made a way for his own children. And let me say God will make a way for you.

And I know that God will make a way for me. I haven't any problems about that. God made a way for them.

And the sea was rolled back and there's a passage made through. And all passed through the sea in that sense. Walking through that passage.

And the cloud that was really leading them on. The pillar of cloud. It covered over the passage.

So that the children that were redeemed. They're in the passage and they're covered over. You get that.

Because the next word is. And we're all baptized. Covered.

That's what it's all about baptism you know. An old fellow said to me once. There was a great crowd of them here of all ages.

Aye they were all redeemed by blood you know. They weren't kids just. Redeemed by blood.

And if they were the first born they were redeemed by blood. And all the redeemed the saved. Were buried under the cloud and in the sea.

It's quite simple isn't it. Don't want to take the time to preach believer of baptism. But it's there alright.

Yes and we're all baptized onto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. You see he was counting them all as his. He was the leader.

And did all eat the same spiritual meat. You see when God redeemed them by the blood of the lamb. And when God brought them through the sea.

And covered them by the pillar of cloud. God brought them into the wilderness. And rained manna down from heaven.

And did all eat the same spiritual meat. You can remember that can't you. And then we're coming near the problem bits.

And did all drink the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them. Now that's where the problem comes in.

And let me tell you that this problem this evening. It's a problem that sort of staggers the ordinary reader. Because we remember Israel being brought out of Egypt.

And we remember them going through the sea. And we remember them eating the manna. And we remember Moses smiting the rock.

And the water came and they all drank of that spiritual rock. And then it says that spiritual rock that followed them. Now it was actually a literal rock that Moses smote with the rod.

Now did this literal rock actually follow the children of Israel through the wilderness for 40 years. That's the problem. Now I don't think you need to bother about the little phrase and that rock was Christ.

That's only a phrase that brings out the authority of typical teaching. And we'll get round to typical teaching in a moment or two. Now let's go to the book of Exodus for a moment or two.

And we're at chapter 17. The book of Exodus. And we're at the 17th chapter.

Verse 1. Just a little bit of reading here to get the proper connection. And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of sin. After their journeys according to the commandment of the Lord and pitched in Rephidim.

And there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses. And it's a mighty word, the word chide.

Because when the least little thing went wrong, they always murmured against the leader. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the people thirsted there for water and the people murmured against Moses.

And I don't know how many times that's in this book. Because God's people are the greatest crowd of murmurers that anybody ever met. Just sneeze wrong, you'll find it out.

And the people murmured against Moses and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt? To kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst. And Moses cried unto the Lord saying, He's praying now, What shall I do unto this people? They be all most ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people and take with thee of the elders of Israel and thy rod.

Wherewith thou smotest the river. Take in thine hand and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb.

And thou shalt smite the rock. And there shall come water out of it that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

And they called the name of the place Masah and Meribah. But because of the chiding of the children of Israel and because they tempted the Lord saying, Is the Lord among us or not? That's the story of Moses striking the rock in Horeb and the people drinking. And when we go back we find that this is what Paul says.

Paul says they did all eat the same spiritual meat and did all drink the same spiritual drink for they drank of the rock, of that spiritual rock that followed them. And that rock was Christ. And this little phrase, that rock which followed them has been a debating ground down through the years.

You know, it's a problem to the ordinary reader. He stops and wonders. An old Sunday school teacher said to me once, sitting in the class today, a wee lad said, Sir, did this rock really follow them through the wilderness for 40 years? What would you say if you were the teacher? Do you know? And of course this has not only been a problem for the ordinary reader and a problem for Sunday school teachers but young preachers have been face to face with it and don't know the answer.

And I can tell you that when you come to the greatest commentaries and the greatest and most scholarly commentators in the world what a mess they have made of it. What a mess it is. And just because the commentators and expositors don't know where they are you see this text has been the playground for

modernists.

They think they've got something to lick their lips over here to prove how stupid this book is. And not only modernists but critics of the book and enemies of the eternal word. They're all arrayed here.

This is the problem this evening. Can I just point out one or two things that the commentators say? You know there's an old Jewish commentary it's probably the oldest commentary in the world. It's called Haggadah.

And the old Jewish Haggadah says the rock actually followed them every step of the journey for the whole 40 years in the wilderness. Now I don't want to pooh-pooh that just like that because if God said anywhere in this book that the rock actually literally followed them then I should believe that. I would have no problems in believing God because the things that are impossible with men are gloriously possible with God.

And this supposed to be wonderful pulpit commentary this pulpit commentary says that Paul believed the Haggadah and because he believes the medical of this moving mountain he put this phrase just like this that rock that followed them. You see if you go down all the commentators you'll get some of the most curious ideas. Probably one of the greatest sets of commentaries in the world is C.J. Eliot's or Ellicott's.

Old Ellicott, I think I should say this that almost every preacher in the world has benefited some way by reading Ellicott's commentary. And yet I will read to you what this trusty expositor says about this. He says a fragment broken from the rock back at home a fragment 15 feet high was carried by a band of men throughout the whole wilderness journey for 40 years and every time that the pillar of cloud rested the rock was set up and water came for its flow.

Out of Ellicott. It's really amusing. So you don't swallow everything that's in the commentary.

I hope you don't. You'll need to take your time now. Adam Clarke of whom Spurgeon said he was probably the ablest expositor that ever lived he says that the word rock here doesn't mean rock it only means water.

And that Israel got water from the rock back there and carried it through and sent water carriers back the whole journey and it's only water that followed them. I'm afraid that wouldn't do. I'm afraid it says for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ.

And the emphasis is on the rock won't do. And you can go on through a mighty list of these supposed to be great expositors. Dinolford of whom Sidlou Baxter said on one occasion that he was the giant of all the Greek scholars.

He said it is hardly possible here without doing violence to the word of Paul and the construction of the passage to deny that this literally followed Israel through the wilderness. Dinolford. We're getting worse as we go on.

I'm afraid we'll have to stop this because I'll have to say all these like sheep have gone astray. Now let us in the class tonight let us just settle down to clear honest thinking praying that the Holy Ghost to know the truth will guide us into all truth. And I believe as we're guided into the truth tonight you'll be thrilled in your soul and it will be a blessing to you in days to come to watch the passage very carefully.

You see let me say this there is nothing in the Old Testament. You take the whole 40 chapters of Exodus the book of Exodus and in the whole complete 40 chapters there is not one word of a rock literally following Israel. You never read anything like that you only read it in the rubbish of these books.

Surely it would have been in the book of books wouldn't it? And you leave the 40 chapters of Exodus and you come to the 27 chapters of Leviticus and there is not one word or hint or shadow of any kind to say that a literal rock followed Israel in the wilderness for 40 years. It is not there. And you come from Exodus and Leviticus and you come to the 36 chapters of Numbers and in the whole complete 36 chapters giving you almost step by step details of the journey of Israel in the wilderness there is not one shadow of this sort of thing there at all.

And you come to 34 chapters in Deuteronomy and there is no mention there at all. And if you add them all together there is 137 chapters in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and there is not one word about it. I'm not prepared to listen to men when it's not in the book.

So there's something wrong somewhere and we've got to be very careful. Now when you look carefully at what Paul has said and we're back in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 now. Now I know that even from the authorized or even from the revised version you're not going to see this this evening.

But I know that some of you here have very old Bibles in your hands. There's one or two Greek scholars here and there's one or two boys who carry Bibles who have great details on the foot of the page. And I think you're going to see this that Paul did not say that the rock followed the Israelites.

Paul didn't say that. See the word them. Watch me reading verse 4. And did all drink the same spiritual drink for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed.

And the word them is not in the original at all. See the boy down there nodding, all right. It's good to have a good Bible like that, isn't it? Because that word is not there.

You see the objective pronoun them is not there, it's not in the original. Yes, the word followed is there. The rock that followed.

I have it on the notes, that rock which followed them. And that's what it is in the original. Now let me try to work this out for you till you see the wonder of it.

Supposing I should say to you this evening as the band went up the street last evening sometimes we have the old band in the street, bless them. Supposing I should say to you that I followed the band and I sometimes do, you know, yes. You would know exactly where I was.

I would be behind the band somewhere. I followed the band. That's easy, isn't it? Supposing I should say that I was going down the middle of the street and the band followed me.

You would know where I was also, wouldn't you? I'm not behind the band now, I'm in the front now. Now supposing I were describing to you the Lord Mayor's show. Sometimes there's the Lord Mayor's show in Belfast and it's worth going to see.

Supposing it had been yesterday and I'm describing it tonight and I say the Lord Mayor's coach came first and the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress they were in the coach and they were looking lovely and they were waving out to the people and describing this parade. Now the Lord Mayor's coach was first.

Supposing I should say that the army tanks came next one or two big ones, three or four small ones but the Lord Mayor's coach was first and then the army tanks came second.

And then thirdly in the parade the Queen's Island workmen were there. You're getting this parade all right, aren't you? The Lord Mayor's coach and then the army tanks and then the Queen's Island men. Supposing I should say the band followed.

Do you know where the band is now? It's not one now, sure it's not. It's not two, it's not three, it's four. This is exactly what Paul said.

I don't know what they all got fussed up about because there isn't any problem. Now watch what happened to Israel. Watch me reading it for you.

He said this. Moreover brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant. I'm going to tell them a lot of things about what happened to our fathers.

Actually four things. He says, how that all our fathers were under the clouds and all passed through the sea. Now that happened to be first.

You see when God brought the mouth of Israel through the blood of the Lamb and his outstretched arm well you know God made a way for them and they all passed through the sea and under the cloud, that's first. And were all baptized unto Moses because he's taking this as a sort of figure of baptism and they're actually buried and they really belong to the leader. And that was second, isn't it? And did all eat the same spiritual meat and that's third.

And did all drink the same spiritual drink for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed. And that followed number three. It is not talking about following the people.

It is not related like that even. It just follows on in its place in the parade, that's all. I don't know what they were fiddling at at all.

And we hear the greatest clap-trap that ever was and young believers are upset. If I told you that a mighty mountain of rock shifted itself every two or three hours or every two or three days and wandered through the wilderness well I'm not coming back after tonight but there wouldn't be any chance of me coming back I'd be put in some lunatic asylum. And here we have the greatest expositor supposed to be in the world and they fiddle with it.

Just fiddle with it. And some of the old saints who never went to school but who sat at the feet of Christ and heard his word they can discover the truth all right. Two things for you to learn now very carefully.

That is, that you must pay attention to every phrase before you. And as I said on a thousand occasions not only to every phrase but to how the phrase is pronounced and emphasized. The other Sunday morning I was telling them about the first phrase in the 23rd Psalm the Lord is my shepherd.

And you can say this the Lord is my shepherd but that is not what David said. That's a new statement altogether. You can put the emphasis on the uniqueness of the Lord the Lord, nobody like him, I know that.

That's not what David is saying. You can put the emphasis on the tense the Lord is. That's not what David is saying.

Here's what David is saying he's saying the Lord is my shepherd. You say how do you know? You've a right to ask me that. Because the whole Psalm is my after that.

He restoreth my soul he anointeth my head with oil my cup runneth over surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And if you get the phrase right and you get the emphasis right you'll get the truth right and you'll get your soul blessed. And the truth here is that there were four things and there's one and two and three and the rock followed the third one.

And there's no problem with it at all it's the insertion of this word that was not in the original. That's the bother here. The word then was never there because it is not related to the people at all.

Now I want to take a moment or two with a little phrase that rock was Christ. Now that just means this that that rock that was smitten that refreshed and blessed the people in the wilderness that rock was typical of Christ. Don't let's get this that Christ was walking about in the Old Testament there just like that.

No, this rock that came forth it was typifying what Christ could do and it gives us the authority to find typical teaching in this book. And you know you young preachers want to really get down to the typical teaching of the book. I think you know this, don't you? That as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

So that when we go back and see the smitten rock there's a whole lot about Christ there. So that when we go back and we see the serpent lifted up on the pole then there's a whole lot about Christ's death there, isn't it? When it says in this book that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us oh you can go back to the Passover and you'll find so many wonderful things the Lamb chosen and then slain and the blood applied yea, and the satisfaction that the roast lamb gives to all who are under the blood. Do I need to go on with it? Let me do this one for you, really do it.

Have a look at Hebrews 13 last chapter of Hebrews Hebrews chapter 13 Now I believe that Paul is the writer to the Hebrews and at verse 11 this is what he says For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp and I want you to see the beasts you can take a lamb if you like, you can take a bullock if you like we'll take a young bullock Now it's being offered here as a sin offering The bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin Now we're at the typical sin offering You say to me you're quite sure that this is one of the types?

You see it's easy to see that the rock was a type, that rock was Christ It's easy to see that the serpent on the pole was Christ Moses lifted up the serpent even so must the Son of Man be lifted up It's easy to see that the Passover, Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us Now there's about 30 or 40 more of these wonderful types Now look at this one, here's how I'm sure You see in verse 11 Paul the writer is talking about the sin offering, the beast He's talking first of all about the bodies of those beasts And then he's talking secondly about the blood Whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin And then he's talking about the burning of those bodies The bodies were burned without the camp Now watch this Wherefore Jesus also ask quick of lightning I stand to be corrected but I don't think anybody will correct me That this is the only place in the Bible where you get the type And then the fulfillment of the type in two verses Right together There's no bother with it now Bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin Are burned without the camp Wherefore Jesus that he might sanctify the people with his own blood Suffered without the gate Both there aren't they?

Now that's a type alright But how wonderful it is You know there's so many things in it There's just one word that needs to be emphasized This I try to tell the young preachers Find the word you emphasize Where do you see me doing it for you? For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin Are burned without the camp Wherefore Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood Suffered Is that the one that's re-echoing is it?

Cause if you get the hold of that and you see the burning Then you're going to see the suffering Of the savior Oh but there's much more there than that you know You see when he talks about the bodies of those beasts Those bodies are burned without the camp See this man bringing this bullet this sin offering And the priest sheds its blood quick as lightning Just cuts its jugular vein and gets its blood in the basin And it's a goner Now they have separated body and blood now did you know that?

But how do you know? Not when you speak with the body The bodies of those beasts See they carry the body outside the camp They're burned out there Let me tell you that the camp of Israel Is bigger than Belfast There are twelve tribes there Yes there are three tribes on each side of the tabernacle It's in the middle And there were thousands and thousands in each tribe And I'll tell you it was covering some acreage And they carry this body very carefully The priests carry it outside the camp And it's burned Completely burned Only ashes left Now that body was typical of what?

Typical of Christ's body Wherefore Jesus That he might sanctify the people with his own blood Suffered without beginning You know when our Lord Jesus Was outside the city wall Let's just take his body first of all It was very precious this body of Christ's You see he his own self Bear our sins Where did he get this to you? In his own body Nowhere else On the tree Over talking to me About him bearing sin in Gethsemane That's baloney And don't please come to talk to me About him rolling his robe back And bearing his back And hammering his back They tell me They try to tell me that they put the cancer And they put consumption And they put cancer And all the diseases there And they made atonement for them Oh bless you My dear friend I'll quote it correctly to you He his own self Bear our sins in his own body On the tree Did you get that?

Because that was on the tree Now I see the little word bear That's a Greek word It is a mighty Greek word You can look it up in the lexicon when you go home It actually means That he was spread eagled Stark naked They parted his garments among them And for his vesture they did cast lots And God laid on him The iniquity of us all My sins were laid on him And he his own self Bared them away They're gone Many of them Are all gone When he had by himself purged our sins Oh what a mighty sickness Bore them away You see the body gone that way Bearing my sins away That finishes the sin question You see what they did with his blood You see what they did with the blood of the bullet Don't you?

They caught it in a basin The bodies of those beasts Whose blood is brought into the sanctuary Oh they didn't take the blood out that way They brought the blood in this way Right into the very centre of things Right into the sanctuary Right into the holy of holies And they sprinkled it on the mercy seat Where God was Because you see That mighty, stupendous, atoning, redeeming Sacrifice of Calvary Not only dealt with my sins In their totality for eternity But perfectly satisfied my God Because God was satisfied God said when I see the blood I pass over you Really we mean it, it's not finished yet You see when you take body that way And bring blood this way You're separating body and blood And if you separate my body and blood This evening I shall die Jesus died Now let's get this That

through death He destroyed him Who had the power of death At Calvary, glorious Calvary He put away sin By the sacrifice of himself He satisfied God on my account For all eternity with his precious blood And he bruised the serpent's head Hallelujah What a saviour He's just one of the types Oh this book is full of typical teaching But let's look at the rock for a moment or two That rock was Christ You know we had a great old preacher in this country Many years ago called John Murphy I don't suppose very many in this meeting would Have known John Murphy He was an old man with a beard But oh how he knew the Lord And how he knew the book He had never been to the morn mountains And he said to me They sing about these mountains going down to the sea And I said John would you like to go And he

said Willie I would love to go to the morn mountains So that when I could go back to America I'd be able to say I was on the morn mountains And I took him to the morns one day And the way up some of those little back roads in the morns Not just over where the reservoir is And old John stood underneath one of these mighty rocks And they said to me isn't it wonderful And honestly I had seen it a million times And I didn't see anything wonderful about it I was so stupid But John stood gazed and I said Tell me what you're thinking He said you know that rock was Christ The old man was thinking He said do you see it Look how strong it is Because the rock speaks about the strong Christ He says look at it towering into the sky How stately it is Because that rock was Christ Not only the strong

Christ but the stately Christ He said you remember Willie that it was smitten Because he was not only the strong Christ and the stately Christ He was the smitten Christ Remember he was smitten with the rod God told Moses to take the rod The rod that had opened the sea Oh it was the power of God that struck him It was the authority of God And the rock was rent And forthwith came the water And you know he began to preach to me About the strong Christ The mighty God he was talking about The stately Christ The altogether lovely one The smitten Christ The rent rock The suffering one Then he talked about the saving Christ Because when the water came forth My it saved the people didn't it Yes And he went on to talk about The supplying Christ and the satisfying Christ Oh what a joy for me to end

These twenty six and a half years Talking about Christ this evening I hope he'll always be talked about anyway Thus God will bless you in the days to come Let's bow together We'll not sing anymore We'll just bow together before the Lord Lord Dear Lord we bow at thy feet And after all these years And all this precious Preaching and expositing And explaining and expounding We come to this moment When thou hast told us to go Arise and go And he arose and went Lord we ask thee to bless every head thou hast Pray that thou would overshadow our children Pray that thy blessing will be upon them Remember us Lord In the days to come We place our hand In thy hand And we go with thee Part us In thy feet and with thy blessing For thy namesake Amen One seven six Our Lord is now rejected By the world

is owned By the many still neglected And by the few enthroned But soon he'll come in glory The hour is drawing nigh For the crowning day is coming By and by One seven six please Our Lord is now rejected By the world is owned By the many still neglected And by the few enthroned But soon he'll come in glory The hour is drawing nigh For the crowning day is coming By and by Oh the crowning day is coming It's coming by and by When our Lord is crowned in blood And born in our own eyes Oh the glorious light will shine He's waiting for us to rise It's the crowning day that's coming By and by Our Lord is tender The treasure of our days His feet shall shine in glory As Christ shall ever reign The beauty of the Savior Shall come to every eye It's the crowning day that's coming By and by Oh the

crowning day is coming It's coming by and by When our Lord is crowned in blood And born in our own eyes Oh the glorious light will shine He's waiting for us to rise It's the crowning day that's coming By and

by Our days are lengthy, O Lord We still have time to go We thank the Lord our God And ask for joy before Our joy in our Redeemer He looks like Jesus in our eyes It's the crowning day that's coming By and by Oh the crowning day is coming It's coming by and by When our Lord is crowned in blood And born in our own eyes Oh the glorious light will shine He's waiting for us to rise It's the crowning day that's coming By and by I am old and good for days And I'm coming out of the way I am in the creation The Lord's come out of the way I shall be in the Lord From morn to dawn, from morn to

night Oh the crowning day that's coming By and by Oh the crowning day is coming It's coming by and by When our Lord is crowned in blood And born in our own eyes Oh the glorious light will shine He's waiting for us to rise It's the crowning day that's coming By and by

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