

# Balaam, Balak and the blessing of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] That's quite a story, isn't it?

Thanks very much, Angela, for reading it so well to us. You know you can always trust a retired English teacher to read well. We want to make sure that the scriptures are open in front of you, back to Numbers chapter 22 to 24.

For those of you who are joining us, visiting today, I will write smack in the middle in the series on the book of Numbers. I think we've spent the last two months or so in it, and we are more or less in the middle, and you will join us for a really exciting story.

There's also an outline in your bulletin, and that will help you to follow along. But what we really need is God's help to understand what he has to say to us. So let's pray. Let's ask his help.

Heavenly Father, we just thank you so much that your word is living and active. And we just pray now that as you speak to us through Numbers 22 to 24, help us again to just marvel and be in awe of the kind of God you are, and to worship you, to fall down in praise, and to give you all the glory.

[ 1 : 32 ] All this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. Now a total solar eclipse is something to behold, isn't it? I've never experienced one, although I'm told that if you're in Kuala Lumpur at lunch during Boxing Day this year, you might be able to see a partial eclipse.

But a partial eclipse pales in comparison to a total one. It's that moment when the moon comes between the sun and the earth in perfect alignment, and the moon casts the darkest part of its shadow called the umbra on planet earth.

And for a period of time, depending on where you are, you can't see anything. Here's how one eyewitness describes her experience.

She says the day started out bright, really bright, like the midsummer, blue sky, laundry detergent commercial kind of brightness. And as advice, I put on glasses to watch the moon progress as the eclipse begins to happen.

And when I take off my glasses for a moment to look around, the world had become noticeably dimmer. Not exactly in the way it gets dim in the evening, because the sky was still bright blue, and the sun was still overhead.

[ 2 : 53 ] But this was something unique, something that didn't quite make sense. The light that wrapped around us was slightly green, my eyes couldn't adjust to it. Strange is the best word to describe it.

And it was a little disturbing to watch that dimness grow. Then, in the last 30 seconds before totality, things got really dark. When the moon fully covered the sun, I couldn't believe the blackness that descended.

The bright red colour had descended into orange, and then into the deep blackish blue that surrounded the sun and the moon.

And I wonder if that description also captures some of our experiences with God. For many of us, our walk with God starts out really bright. We know Him, we love Him, and we feel like we're seeing Him in all His radiant glory.

But somewhere along the way, the world starts becoming dimmer, and God stops making sense. Well, we're not quite sure why. But we can't seem to see Him as clearly.

[ 4 : 03 ] And we grow increasingly disturbed as the dimness grows. And then at some point, things get really dark, and God disappears from view. We know He's there somehow, but we have no idea what He's up to.

It's like He's there, but He's not there. Or to switch metaphors, sometimes God feels like one of my friends on Facebook. I have a friend whom I'll call James.

We were pretty good friends, I hope we still are. And he used to be fairly active online, often appearing in my newsfeed and making comments on my profile page. But slowly, he began to disappear from view.

He doesn't post anymore. He doesn't comment on anything. He's not active in any way. The last I checked, we were still friends.

And I was still following him. But I have no idea what He's up to at the moment. And that's how I can sometimes feel with God. We're kind of still friends.

[ 5 : 10 ] We say we are following Him. But really, He's disappeared from view in our lives. And so we ask, What is God up to?

When He seemingly disappears from view, what is God up to? Is He up to anything at all when I don't see Him? Or is He like my plumber, who always seems to be outstation on holiday and is uncontactable the moment my kitchen sink fails?

Or is He more like the sun, when blocked by the moon, willing but unable to help us receive His light at those times? What is God up to?

But this morning, Numbers 22 to 24 is going to shine a light on this matter for us. And it's going to do that by taking us to a place where Israel can't see.

All throughout this book, we've been on the road with Israel. We started out at the foot of Mount Sinai, watching them get ready to march into battle.

[ 6 : 20 ] In Numbers 10, we watched them set foot from Sinai and travel all the way to Kadesh. The first time they were there, their faithlessness came to the fore as they refused to enter the Promised Land.

And so God sent them back into the wilderness to wander for 40 years as part of their judgment. Well, we've been hearing about that over the past month. But God is faithful.

And so as those 40 years draw to a close, He brings them back to Kadesh, as we saw last week.

And now from Kadesh, they make another trip, which 22 verse 1 tells us brings us now to the plains of Moab.

And that's significant because 22 verse 1 tells us that it's just right across from Jericho. In other words, they can literally see the Promised Land.

It's right in front of them. And that means the journey is almost over. In fact, the book of Numbers ends with Israel camp on the plains of Moab.

[ 7 : 28 ] But all of a sudden, for the first time in this book, the camera shifts away from Israel. For the next three chapters, the focus is not so much on Israel at Moab, but on the king of Moab.

We're taken away from the pillar of fire and the tabernacle and leaders like Moses, whom we've been travelling with, to find out what God is up to in the places Israel cannot see.

We're taken into the enemy camp, as it were, to watch God at work with a very different kind of people in a very different setting.

We're going to find out what God is up to. So what I'm going to do, first of all, is to walk us through this story and we'll draw little lessons here and there along the way.

But at the end, I hope it becomes crystal clear what the main take-home lesson should be. So let's look at scene one.

[ 8 : 35 ] The powerful gather. The powerful gather. The first character we're introduced to is Balak. And he's a worried man. Verse two.

Now Balak, son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites and Moab was terrified because there were so many people.

Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites. Last week, of course, at the end of Numbers 21, the king of the Amorites had decided to pick a fight with Israel and he lost everything, including the city of Heshbon.

And that would have caught Balak's attention because Heshbon used to belong to Moab until they lost it in battle to the Amorites.

But now, Israel has triumphed over these same Amorites. And not only that, last week we didn't have a chance to read it, but Israel subsequently encountered Og, king of Bashan.

[ 9 : 45 ] They met him in battle and they also scored a decisive victory. And now they're at Moab's doorstep. We're talking hundreds of thousands of people here.

So it's no surprise Balak felt threatened. Are we next? He must have wondered. And with his top military leaders, he makes a quick strategic assessment and concludes verse 4, this horde is going

to lick up everything around us as an ox licks up the grass of the field.

He's going to need more firepower. But what we also need to understand is that while Balak is a worried man, he's also a powerful man.

That fact might have been obscured for us by his anxiety, but just look carefully. Don't forget his position. He's the king.

And he's got a powerful network. He's obviously managed to strike up an alliance with his neighbours, Midian. And he appears to be the senior partner in this relationship.

[10:58] He can get the elders of Midian, whom he's just talked to, to do his bidding. And he decides to tap into his powerful network and look beyond his borders to seek the most powerful help possible.

And that's why verse 5, he summons Balaam. Now we'll look at Balaam in more detail in a moment. But basically, we know he's a seer, a witch doctor.

After all, in verse 7, the delegation has prepared a fee for divination. And clearly, Balaam is no ordinary bomoh, no random manang from some random kampong somewhere.

Just look at how Balaam describes Balaam in his message to him at the end of verse 6. For I know that whomever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed.

In other words, Balaam is saying, I know your reputation. I know, Balaam, that your success rate is incredibly high. I know that you're number one in your field.

[12:16] When you speak, as the Iban would say, wah, lekas sumpah pemadu bisa, your curse is most potent. So I go for the best.

And of course, I have the money. Later on in verse 17, Balak will promise Balaam an extravagant reward, showing that money is no barrier.

So what I want us to realise is that the powerful are gathering. Balak, the powerful king, with powerful friends, is summoning Balaam, the powerful sorcerer, someone seen as capable of putting a curse on hundreds of thousands of people.

And notice what they are planning to use their collective power for. Notice again the language of verse 6. Let me read it to you again. For I know that whomever you bless is blessed and whoever you curse is cursed.

I wonder, does that kind of language ring any bells for you? Especially for those of you who have gone through God's big picture before? Well, back in Genesis 12, verse 1 to 3, God made a promise to Israel's founding ancestor, Abraham.

[13:45] And in verse 3, the Lord tells Abraham, those who bless you, I will bless. Those who curse you, I will curse. But now, here's Balak telling Balaam, whoever you bless will be blessed.

Whoever you curse will be cursed. And so what we have here is a direct challenge to God. The battle lines are clearly drawn.

Balak is setting himself against God and his purposes. He's really daring, isn't he? It's either God or Balak and Balaam.

Well, Balak is behaving in the typical ways of worldly powers. He's trying to think of ways to maintain his position, his status, his worldly station by all means necessary.

And in our world, that's how it's always been. Think of President Xi Jinping right now in China, shutting down churches, adding state propaganda to sermons, indoctrinating children to report their Christian relatives.

[15:03] Think of Narendra Modi in India, deliberately turning a blind eye towards persecution of religious minorities and implicitly empowering Hindu extremists to do violence to Christians.

Well, think of us in Malaysia, where someone like Pastor Raymond Kaur can be abducted in broad daylight and his abductors yet to be brought to justice.

In this world, there have always been powerful people looking to set themselves against God and his purposes. As Psalm 2, verse 2-3 says, the kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.

And so the question is, is Balak and those like him going to get their way? And just before we move on to the next scene, I want you to remember that in all of this, Israel is oblivious.

They have no idea any of this is going on. They're probably putting their feet up after a long journey and watching TV. unaware that at this very moment, a pagan king is trying to call on occultic powers to place a curse on them.

[ 16 : 35 ] They will eventually hear of this story, that's why it's in our Bibles. But at this point, they know nothing of what's going on. So what's going to happen next?

Well, let's move on to scene 2, the greedy witch doctor. the greedy witch doctor. A delegation is dispatched from Moab to Petor where Balaam is.

And when we meet Balaam, well, he's quite an interesting character indeed. On the one hand, he identifies as a prophet of God. He seems to put himself under the Lord's authority.

Just look at verse 8, for example. Spend the night here, Balaam said to the delegation, and I will report back to you with the answer the Lord gives me.

He tells the delegation that he needs to consult the Lord on this matter. And notice that he uses the personal name for God. Whenever you see the word Lord all capitalized in your English Bibles as in verse 8, well, God's personal name, Yahweh, is being used there.

[ 17 : 50 ] So he sounds like he's very familiar with God. So is he a man of God? It sounds at first glance like he is. But the testimony of the New Testament should give us pause.

Every single time the New Testament mentions Balaam, it does so negatively. In chapter 2, sorry, in 2 Peter 2, verse 15, he's described as loving the wages of wickedness.

In Jude 11, he's described as being only interested in profit. In Revelation 2, verse 14, he's described as leading people into sin.

And certainly in 2 Peter 2, Peter says false prophets are those who follow in the way of Balaam.

And so that tells us we should be in no hurry to anoint Balaam as an authentic prophet from God.

He clearly does receive revelation from God. But as we'll soon see, that doesn't automatically mean he is an orthodox follower of the Lord.

[ 19 : 00 ] That's true today as well, isn't it? Just because someone has an international reputation, claims to hear from God, and perhaps even says true things from time to time, doesn't mean he is a Christian, never mind a genuine prophet.

For an important principle of interpretation is to let scripture interpret scripture. And although it's not easy to tell just from Numbers 22 itself how we should perceive Balaam, well, the rest of the Bible seems to suggest that we need to see everything he says and thus with a degree of skepticism.

After all, he practices divination, which the Bible will go on to later condemn. All these are pointers, I believe, that Balaam is not to be taken positively.

So let's read scene two through these lense. Balaam consults God, and the Lord replies, verse 12, do not go with them.

You must not put a curse on these people, because they are blessed. Now, that's pretty clear. And so he seems like a good guy, because he goes and tells the delegation, well, God told him not to go.

[ 20 : 23 ] And then when Balaam comes back with a sweetener, in verse 15, sending more VVIPs, as well as offering more money, again, Balaam says, no, in verse 18, I can't go against God, he says.

So he seems like a good guy. But then, you have this strange part where God permits Balaam to go in the end, in verse 20, but then in verse 22, God is angry when he went.

So what's going on here? Is God being double-minded? Well, no. Remember how the New Testament tells us how to see Balaam as someone motivated by greed?

And what Balaam is doing is playing the negotiation game very well. Let me explain. Over the years, I've had a chance to learn firsthand about cross-cultural communication.

And one of the things I've learned is that while in some cultures, such as white Australian culture, a yes is a yes, and a no is a no, in many cultures, including probably our own, is not so straightforward.

[ 21 : 38 ] So when you have a Filipino or a Turkish visitor come into your home and you offer him tea, and he says, no, it's okay.

Actually, I'm not so thirsty. Well, you shouldn't assume that his no is a no. He just doesn't want to appear too forward, too direct, too over-eager.

What you should do is insist. You say, no, no, no, here's the tea for you. And then eventually you make the tea for him to drink, and he will eventually drink it. And so when Balaam initially says no, in verse 13, his no is not really a no.

Rather, it is an invitation to Balak to continue negotiating. Notice what Balaam leaves out in his message to the delegation.

So in verse 13, he tells the delegation, God said, don't go. But he doesn't say. Actually, God said, these people can never be cursed. So as not to discourage Balak from coming back with a higher offer.

[ 22 : 53 ] And sure enough, as he expects, Balak does. And when Balaam refuses again, in verse 18, with a very spiritual sounding answer. Well, actually, he doesn't stop there in verse 18.

He doesn't just say, oh, you know, even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I couldn't go beyond the command of the Lord. No, he adds in verse 19, now spend the night here so that I can find out what else the Lord will tell me.

What else? What else is there to find out? God had already told him clearly, you can't go curse Israel. End of story.

But in Balaam's world, gods are just a means to an end. They can be persuaded, they can be manipulated, they can be controlled so that my will be done.

And so Balaam is buying time in the hope that if he plays his cards right, he can manipulate Yahweh to let him go and cash in on this big payday.

[ 24 : 05 ] And it is his motives ultimately which lead to God's anger. God says he can go, but presumably so that through Balaam, he will make clear to Balaam that his only intention is to bless Israel.

But Balaam clearly goes to do what Balaam paid him to do, curse Israel. As verse 32 will later put it, his actions are nothing short of reckless.

And verse 37 implies that Balaam knew Balaam expected to be paid, meaning Balaam expected to carry out the tasks that Balaam had paid him to do.

And so God is angry that Balaam is refusing in his heart to accept God's word that Israel is not to be cursed. Whenever we try to manipulate God, whether to chase money or to secure our legacy or to satisfy ungodly curiosity, well, we displease him.

we may do so even while appearing all spiritual, like Balaam, nodding our heads along to the preacher on Sunday, saying all the right things, or living a different way on Monday, showing that in our hearts we refuse God's word.

[ 25 : 37 ] Well, that's displeasing to God. And so God acts. And we come now to scene three, the perceptive donkey.

And what we have here is pure comedy. As Balaam travels with his donkey, three times the angel of the Lord comes and stands in his way.

And three times the donkey sees and engages in defensive driving. Well, first time he swerves off the road, second time he crushes Balaam's foot against the wall, and third time he sits under him. And three times the poor donkey gets beaten. All because the great prophet, the great witch doctor, the great seer with this international reputation cannot see what's in front of him.

He cannot see the angel. And so he's blinder than the donkey. And when Balaam verse 29 scolds the donkey, you have made a fool of me.

[ 26 : 50 ] He's right. God is using the donkey to show the fool that he is. And when Balaam says, if only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you donkey, right now.

well, that's ironic. Because it's actually the donkey who has saved him from being killed by the angel's sword. And then the donkey speaks.

He defends himself. And even in the Bible, talking animals are very rare. He says, verse 30, Am I not your own donkey which you have always ridden to this day?

Have I been in the habit of doing this to you? No, he said. Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn.

And so he bowed low and fell face down. And so God is putting words in the donkey's mouth. And what God is doing is to actually use the donkey to paint a picture of what's going to happen to Balaam himself.

[ 28 : 13 ] You see, God's not going to let some greedy, manipulative, witch doctor think he can simply come, curse God's people, and stop God's plan.

And so he uses a donkey to prepare us for what's going to happen in Numbers 23 to 24. He uses a donkey to help us to see what God is up to in the places his people cannot see.

For just as God opened the donkey's mouth and put words in them, so God is going to open Balaam's mouth and put words in them.

And just as the donkey three times is caught between the angel's sword and the master's stick, and so Balaam will soon find himself caught three times between the demands of his master, Balak, and the plans of God.

God. The pagan witch doctor is going to carry out God's purposes, whether he likes it or not.

[ 29 : 31 ] And that takes us to scene four, when curses turn to blessing. But we have more comedy go here. In 23 verse 1 to 2, Balaam has Balak do all these grandiose elaborate rituals, seven altars, seven bulls, seven rams.

But even after all these elaborate rituals, Balaam can only say, verse 3, oh, perhaps the Lord will come. Not very certain, is he? But Balak waits expectantly, and then the Lord puts words in Balaam's mouth.

So there is a word from heaven, but it's just not what Balaam expected. Let's look at verse 7.

Balaam starts out well.

He says, Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. Come, he said, curse Jacob for me. Come, denounce Israel.

So far, so good. And you can imagine Balak nodding along as Balaam says that. But Balak's eyes must have popped out as Balaam continues in verse 8. How can I curse those whom God has not cursed?

[ 30 : 50 ] How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced? From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them, I see people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations.

Who can count the dust of Jacob or number even a fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous and may my final end be like Diaz.

By the time he's finished, Balak's jaw is probably on the floor. Just look at verse 11. Balak said to Balaam, What have you done to me?

I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them. And Balaam can only reply, Must I not speak what the Lord puts in my mouth?

Anyway, they try again, this time going for a more modest target. This time Balak says, Ah, Balaam, perhaps you tried to do too much by trying to curse all of Israel in one go.

[ 31 : 52 ] So, verse 13, let's just try cursing part of Israel. But once again, Balaam fails. He opens his mouth to curse Israel. And once again, words of blessing come out.

And this time the blessing goes on for even longer. Let's just take a sample. Just look at verse 21. No misfortune is seen in Jacob. No misery observed in Israel.

The Lord their God is with them. The shout of the king is among them. No wonder Balak says in verse 25, neither curse them at all, nor bless them, at all.

And then they try for a third time. And this time they decide, okay, let's change locations, and let's change techniques. There are more bulls and rams that are sacrificed.

At this point, 42 animals have been sacrificed in all. And Balaam doesn't utilize his usual divination formulas. But no success either. Blessing comes out again.

[ 32 : 54 ] And so not only does Balak's plans fail, they backfire. He ends up blessing Israel three times. But the comedy doesn't stop there.

Balak says, ah, man, just go home. You're rubbish. But just before Balaam packs his bags, well, he can't stop himself, so he throws in a bonus oracle free of charge.

He blesses Israel a fourth time. You see, God has already committed to bless Israel and nothing is going to override that.

These people can sacrifice as many bulls and rams as they want. That's not going to change. God is determined to do good to his people. He's determined to ensure his people get his best.

And so I hope the big overarching take-home message is clear. God is in full control throughout.

[ 34 : 03 ] He's active even in the places we cannot see. Remember that Israel has no idea any of this is going on.

But God is completely in charge. Time and time again, we see that Balaam can only say what God wants him to say. Just look at 22 verse 38.

I can't say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth. Or 23 verse 26. Did I not tell you I must do whatever the Lord says?

And so God will make a fool of those who want to fool him or challenge him. Balaam thinks he can manipulate God and scheme his way to a fat paycheck while cursing Israel.

But God says, if you think that, you're more foolish than a donkey. Balak thinks he's powerful enough to buy his way rather than consider how he should get on God's side.

[ 35 : 14 ] And God says to him, if you think that, well let me show you what your money will get you, you'll get an internationally renowned witch doctor who does the opposite of your will.

Or as Psalm 2 verse 4 says of all those kings and nations who conspire against God, the one enthroned in heaven laughs.

If President Z and others like him do not repent, they will in the end be made a fool. But you see, if we are on God's side, there is nothing to fear.

These men may have all the money and magic spells and curse formulas at their fingertips. And yes, a successfully invoked curse might do real harm.

The Bible does not deny the reality of dark supernatural powers at work. This passage assumes that if Balaam had been successful, that would have been bad news for Israel.

[ 36 : 24 ] But Numbers 22 to 24 says, don't fear. In fact, don't even obsess over things like this. God's people are happily ignoring that all this is going on.

God's love. But in that fog of war, God is acting on behalf of his people, protecting and preserving and even blessing them.

He is in full control, actively working in the places we can't see for our very good. people. I wonder right now if we are even aware of 99% of all that God is doing around us to make sure that we keep running the race as Christians.

Are we aware of all that he's doing to ensure that our lives are safe? Are we aware of all that he's doing to provide for our journey ahead?

I suspect that if God lets us see what he's doing behind the scenes, we'll be simply overwhelmed.

We won't be able to take it. But Numbers 22 to 24 just gives us a little glimpse of what God is doing in the places we can't see, so that we will keep our eyes, not fixed on the unknowns, but on the God of the Bible, on the God whom we can see, and we see that he's sovereign, and he's good.

[ 38 : 07 ] Now, if we had more time, it would have been great to dig more deeply into the oracles themselves to help us see God more clearly. But because we just don't have the time, I just want us to briefly see two more truths from the oracles, just to help us hold fast, to our God.

So, firstly, see the certainty of God's promises. See the certainty of God's promises. Look at 23 verse 19.

God is not human that he should lie, not a human being that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

you? You see what God says he will do? He will do. He doesn't lie, he's not fickle, and he will bless.

And we know that because he's already proven himself. You see, all throughout these oracles, we find references to the promises that God made to Abraham back in Genesis 12.

[ 39 : 14 ] and we see that they have been fulfilled. So for example, in 23 verse 10, Balaam says in breathless wonder, who can count the dust of Jacob on number even a fourth of Israel?

That's an allusion to God's promise to make the descendants of Abraham as numerous as the stars. And he's done it. Balaam and Balaam can see for themselves how many people there are.

Or just look at 23 verse 22 to 23. God brought them out of Egypt. They have the strength of a wild ox. There is no divination against Jacob, no evil omens against Israel.

And that's exactly what the book of Numbers is all about, isn't it? That he's brought them out of Egypt. And here in Numbers 22 to 24, he's just protected them against divination.

All this so that 24 verse 9 can be fulfilled. May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed.

[ 40 : 30 ] A reference we said already back to Genesis 12 verse 3. And that's the promises to look forward to. Just look at 24 verse 5 to 6.

How beautiful are your tents, Jacob. Your dwelling places, Israel. Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the water.

And that's an allusion to the promised land that God is going to give them. And we know that he did. Well, God's promises cannot be stopped.

And you know what? That means those gospel promises, those precious gospel promises that says that even when your body decays, well, God will renew you inwardly day by day.

That even though the earth groans now, it groans in anticipation of a new creation one day coming into being. well, all those promises cannot be stopped.

[ 41 : 40 ] They will happen. But how will he do it? Well, that's the second truth I want us to see. Secondly, see the coming of God's king.

In his bonus oracle, God now has Balaam look far into the future. And he says, chapter 24, verse 17, I see him, but not now.

I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob. A scepter will rise out of Israel. There will one day be a king who will win the victory and who will secure his people.

And that day when the star appeared, indeed, did come. And once again, it shows how God loves to do things upside down. He uses a donkey to shame witch doctors and kings.

And he uses a king, the Messiah, and puts him on the cross to put to shame the worldly powers.

And in this king, in Christ, we find all our spiritual blessings.

[ 42 : 55 ] All of these oracles we find in Numbers 22 to 24 ultimately find their fulfillment fulfillment in Christ. That God is for us and not against us is a promise not just for Israel back then, but for Christians today.

You see, we could so easily read Numbers 22 to 24 and think that this is God's special blessing for a special ethnic group called Israel and nothing to do with the church.

But Numbers 24 verse 17 shows us that's not right by connecting it to Christ. If we think like that, that would be a misunderstanding of how the whole Bible speaks of the people of God, of the relationship between Israel and the church.

And we haven't got time now to go into all that, but I really hope you will come to our September talks with Dr. Essary and Dr. Lau. who will help us to think more biblically about how Israel and the church relate to one another.

But I hope in all this, we see how God is working together in all things for our very good through Christ, even when things look dark in the present moment.

[ 44 : 22 ] A solar eclipse might mean that we cannot see temporarily. but the sun is still there and a solar eclipse is only momentary.

We will see again. And in our lives, perhaps there might be a solar eclipse happening right now and though we might not see what God is up to, well, we know he's there and we will one day see more clearly in the future.

For numbers 22 to 24 tells us he's always working on behalf of his people. And we will never stop praising God for the trillions and trillions of good things he has done in the places we cannot see. let's pray. Father, thank you that you are God and we are not.

Thank you you are a bigger and greater God than we could ever imagine. That you work for us, that you work on behalf of your people, to secure them, to ensure that they will make it to the end.

[ 45 : 48 ] We thank you especially that even in your greatness, yet you still saw fit to send your son, the Lord Jesus, to come down, to take the shame of the cross, so that we might be set free from sin and death.

And so Father, in Christ, help us to appreciate all the spiritual blessings we have in him. And help us to keep running the race, knowing that you are always present with us to see us through.

All this we pray in the name of Christ. Amen. Amen. Church, let them all rise as we respond to the word.

before bah! Thank you before moment.

Who has held deep oceans in His hands?

[ 47 : 05 ] Who has numbered every great us land? His and nations trampled by His voice.

All creation rises to rejoice. Who has given counsel to the Lord?

Who can question many of His words? Who can teach the one of the most of the Lord?

Who can fathom all these wondrous deeds? Let's sing along. Let's sing along. Let's sing along.

Let's sing along.

[ 48 : 44 ] Let's sing along. Let's sing along. Let's sing along.

Let's sing along. Let's sing along. Let's sing along.

Let's sing along. Let's sing along. Let's sing along.

Let's sing along. Let's sing along. Let's sing along.

Let's sing along.

[ 49 : 45 ] Let's sing along. Let's sing along. Let's sing along.

Let's sing along.

You will be forever You will be forever You will be forever You will be forever You will be forever  
You will be forever You will be forever Let me close in a prayer and even read a few verses as we  
end today's service.

Indeed, Lord, you are a faithful God, a covenant God. Amen.

[ 52 : 38 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[ 57 : 39 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.