

Victory

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[0 : 0 0] Well, as we have been working through this very, very big study over the past really over a year where we're going through all the different features that make up the great work of Christ's atonement and we're depicting it all by means of this diagram where each block represents an aspect of Christ's atonement both in terms of its application which is the horizontal bit and its accomplishment which is the up and down bit. We are nearly finished, we have two blocks left to go and then we'll bring our study to a close with a sort of somebody look at the whole thing. So we only have two blocks to go and tonight we are looking at one that really in many ways sums up everything, the topic of victory.

Christ's atonement was a victory and we read a bit about that in 1 Corinthians 15:57. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now as we look at these topics we ask ourselves five questions, what do we mean by victory, who is it that this is referring to, why is it necessary, how is it accomplished and now what are the implications, what, who, why, how, now. So first of all victory, what do we mean when we talk about victory? Well, victory is a massive subject, it's in many ways something that sums up the whole of the atonement, the whole of the biblical message. So in our short time together tonight we'll only really be able to scratch the surface. It's a huge subject but it's also a neglected subject because if I was to ask you what's the first word that comes into your mind when you think of the cross, there's probably many things that will come into your head but victory is perhaps not one of them. Very often we'll think of atonement, salvation, forgiveness, death, life, we don't tend, certainly I don't tend to think of victory when I think of the cross but the New Testament does. In fact the whole Bible very much emphasizes that the cross is a magnificent moment of victory and throughout the New Testament you see the language that reflects this, we see the language of triumph, the language of conquest, the language of destruction, the language of exaltation, the language of lordship. There's some examples here, Hebrews 2:14, since there for the children shed in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil. Colossians 2:15, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. Revelation 5:5, one of the elders said to me, weep no more, behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has conquered. And then the great passage in Philippians 2, being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The atonement was a magnificent moment of victory. Christ has triumphed, he has conquered, he has destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is the devil. And in many ways we always say this phrase, Jesus Christ is Lord or the Lord Jesus. At the heart of that statement is the idea of victory. Jesus is Lord because he is victorious. He sits on the throne of the universe because he is victorious.

He has authority because of his victory. So everywhere is the language of victory. When we think of the cross, we should be thinking of Christ's victorious triumph. But first of all, when we say victory, we are presupposing the fact that there is a conflict. If there's going to be a victory, there has to be some sort of conflict through which this victory arises. And that's exactly what the Bible tells us.

Throughout scripture there is what we can call a dualism, which is basically a separation into two categories. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil. A two sided conflict as it has, as you have it on your hand out, the kingdom of God against the kingdom of evil. And the relationship between these two is one of intense and prolonged conflict. Right from the very beginning, this conflict is

revealed. In the aftermath of the fall, God makes a crucial, crucial statement. This is just after Adam and Eve sinned just after the fall. God says, he says to the serpent, because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field on your belly, you shall go on in your dust. You shall eat all the days of your life. Then verse 15 is a massively important verse. I will quit enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. Now this verse 15 is telling us two absolutely crucial things that we must make sure that we understand. The first thing is telling us is that there will be perpetual conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent summed up by this word, enmity. There will be enmity, conflict between the seed of the woman, her offspring and the devil's offspring. In other words, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. So there is this ongoing perpetual conflict. That's the first thing. The second thing that this tells us is that there will only be one winner because although the serpent's seed will bruise the heel of the woman's seed, the serpent is going to have his head bruised or crushed would probably be the better way of putting it. Obviously a blow to the heel is painful but not fatal. But a blow to the head brings a decisive fatal blow. So there's this enmity, this conflict, but there will only be one winner. And the whole of the Bible and the whole of human history must be understood in the light of this verse. This is a verse that sets out how the rest of existence is going to be until the end of time. A conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. It basically means that the aftermath of the fall turned the universe into a war zone. And we see the evidence of that every day. Whether we look back in history or looking at own circumstances, we see that that is a reality. So we have this conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

[7 : 56] Now we can further divide things up in terms of two historical eras. That's what I have in the hand out there. We have to think of things in two categories, the former days and the last days and they are divided by the cross. Before the cross and after the cross. The cross is the centre point of history. It is the defining moment of history.

So at the very beginning we had the fall here when humanity fell, Adam and Eve sinned. The result of that was that humanity fell. So we are doing here. Humanity. And Satan has usurped his way into a position of authority. So we went down and in a way in a sense the devil went up in that he ruled in a sense over the created realm. He took a level of authority and a level of domination because this is what I think Paul is meaning when he uses the language where he says things like death reigned from Adam to Moses. So you have Adam here, so Adam is here at the fall and then you go through to Moses. Now when we say Moses the significance of that is that that is when the law comes. Death reigned throughout that era. So death reigned from Adam to Moses. Then at Moses we get the law. Now the problem with the law is that instead of restoring us to the way we should be it simply highlights the fact that we are fallen and that we are sinful because when we try to match up to the law we fail. We don't manage it. Satan is dominating the world. The human race is characterised by hostility, by sinfulness, by harshness. Even in the first few chapters of Genesis you get that impression very, very quickly and the post-fall situation is that Satan is reigning. That's why you look through the Old Testament. It's full of conflict, full of war, full of difficulties. All of these things are a reflection of the spiritual conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil. As we said, even God's law instead of making things better in a way makes things worse. Now if you don't misunderstand you wouldn't have seen that, God's law in a way makes things worse because it simply shows us that we're here, that we're sinners and that we're fallen. That's why Paul uses language like we had in 1 Corinthians 15. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. The power of sin is the law in the sense that the law just shows us how far fallen we are. It's in a way a tool that shows the success in inverted commas of the kingdom of evil. Does that make sense? You've got the law instead of us being restored to the way we should be in keeping God's law, it simply highlights our sin and all of that reinforces the domination that Satan has over the world. The power of sin is the law because it shows us that we are sinful. Okay, I hope everybody's still with me with that. Now we can say that Satan ruled in this era because Jesus himself says it. He says that the ruler of this world is going to be cast out. Jesus refers to Satan as the ruler of this world so in this first era Satan is in command. He is ruling, he is dominating, he is the ruler of this world. Now the crucial moment and the centre point of history is the coming of Jesus Christ. When Jesus came and in particularly through his death of the cross, this situation is being reversed. This situation is being changed. Now we'll go over this together a wee bit so hopefully it will make sense. The first thing I want to say is, right, here we have the

kingdom of Satan, okay, dominating the world and causing chaos. The world was in a mess. He is the ruler of this world. That is the kingdom of Satan. Now what was the first thing that Jesus said when he began his ministry? He said, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. And do you see the significance of that? The kingdom of Satan is now going to be deposed by the kingdom of God. Christ has come entering into history to establish his rightful place as king of the created realm. The kingdom of

God comes when Jesus Christ begins his ministry and Jesus has come to put everything right. And so in this great act of conflict, what happens, I hope I can make this clear, Jesus comes to establish his kingdom. In doing so, he overthrows the kingdom of Satan. So now it's Satan that's down here, defeated, conquered. Humanity gets restored because Christ has come to bring healing. And now the law, instead of showing us our sin as it once did, it is now the way that we live our lives in the kingdom of God. You see what's going up and what's going down. It's a terrible picture, but Satan is going down. Humanity is going up. The law goes up. The kingdom of God is established. And this great conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan is the battle and the crucial moment to settle this conflict is on the cross of Calvary. Peter talks about that a little better than

[15:57] I did in Acts chapter two. So you can go home and read that and you'll get a better picture of it. But if you ask the question, why did Jesus come? There's many ways in which you can answer that question. Why did Jesus come? There's many correct answers. But one very important answer is found here in one John 38. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. That's exactly what we're drawing here. The Son of God has come to destroy the works of the devil and to restore the world to how it should be as God's kingdom. The whole purpose of Jesus's mission is to win victory in this great conflict. Okay, that was a lot of information. But as we go along, we'll we'll recap on some of these things. Just at this stage, bear in mind this dualistic conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Now, next question, who can very quickly answer this question from our text in 1 Corinthians 15 57. We read thanks to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in that verse, there are three parties involved. Tell me who they are. Who are the three people in this verse? Three parties on them. Give me one of them. God, wonderful. Give me another one. Excellent. And give me another one. Yes, that's exactly it. And these are the three parties involved in victory.

But that's the question. Who is it? We have God the Father. We have Jesus Christ. And we have us. It's God who instigates this work of victory. We see that I have to rub with that. Colossians chapter one emphasizes that may you be sent with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the heavens of the saints of light. Crucially verse 13.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. It is God who has acted. He made that first pronouncement in Genesis three. He implemented a plan of redemption across the ages, which culminated in the cross. And as Peter says, Jesus died according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. God has acted to address the catastrophic consequences of the fall. And that's why Paul tells us to be thankful to God because it is God who has initiated. Now one point to notice here that is immensely significant. If you go back to Genesis three, where humanity fell. And if you read the first half of that chapter, there are three active participants in the fall.

There is the serpent, there is the man, and there is the woman. These are the three active participants. And crucially, God isn't one of them. God does not act and does not contribute and does not do anything to cause the fall. In other words, it is completely not God's doing. And yet it is God who puts it right. It is God who takes action. It is God who takes the initiative. It is God who is restoring us from the catastrophic consequences of the fall. And that's an amazing, amazing reminder of his grace. So first of all, there is God.

And secondly, there is the son. The Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 2:14. I think I've read this already. The children share in flesh and blood. That's us. Jesus himself, particularly the same things. He became one of us that through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death. That is the devil. And the very clear emphasis of first Corinthians and of the New Testament is that the victory is through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the result of what he has done. Jesus is the soldier. Jesus is the warrior. Jesus is the pioneer, as the Lord Jesus says, who accomplishes this victory.

[20 : 34] He became one of us as this verse says, he took our death and there he won victory for us. And because he died as a perfect sacrifice, he destroyed the power of death and of course rose again. The cross made the resurrection unstoppable. And the resurrection tells us that the cross is all powerful. Now we'll think a little bit more about that when we come to the how question. But the key point is that it's through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you go back to the very beginning of first Corinthians 15, when you get home, Paul tells us that these are the things of first importance. And that's through that Christ died and rose again. But the third party that you correctly identified is this one, us. God has given the victory to us. Now this is immensely important because it tells us that although we do not in any way contribute to the victory, we completely and fully participate in it. Christ's victory is given to us. His victory is for us. Now this is remarkable because as we've been saying, do I have a text there? As we've been saying you have the kingdom of God in opposition to the kingdom of evil. And you have a fierce conflict between the two of these. They're fighting, they're in conflict, they're against each other. Now we can easily think that we are observing it here. That we are standing looking on. We can think of ourselves as spectators, but we are not spectators at all. In this conflict, we are prisoners of war on this side held captive by the power of Satan's kingdom. And as God wins the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ, he does it so that we can benefit, so that we can be freed. Christ's victory is for our liberation. And that's why we don't look at God and say, well done for defeating the kingdom of evil. We look at God and we say, thank you for saving me. This conflict is of the deepest significance for us because it is through Christ's victory that we are freed from the kingdom of darkness and brought to the kingdom of light. And as a reminder, if you think about how people must have felt when the news came through that the Second World War was won, some people in our community, I'm sure you can still remember that. That feeling is a measure of how we should feel when we think of the cross. It's a victory moment, a triumph, a freedom whereby we have been set free. And that is of immense practical significance to us. I'll have to rub this out. I'm getting too excited with my pen tonight. This is of immense practical significance to us because how many of you look at the world and feel absolutely dismayed by the state of it? You look and you see suffering, you see corruption, you see immorality, you see all sorts of things that reflect the ravaging of the kingdom of evil. And we look at that and we despair and yet we shouldn't because we should remember that the victory has been won. Christ has won victory over all the immorality in the world, over all the sinfulness, over all the evil that we still see. That's why Jesus could say, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Now, when I look at the news and see all the hideous things that happen, I hunger and thirst for righteousness. And I know that you do too. And Jesus says you shall be satisfied because he has won victory. The kingdom of evil is the most unsatisfying, distressing, awful thing in existence, but it's been defeated. The victory has been won. And of course, that has many, many, many practical elements of practical significance for us. Not least, if you stand by the grave of a fellow believer. How can people feel so happy though? So happy? Yeah, well, in the kingdom of evil, people who are not believers. Yes? I've heard someone saying, I've had a wonderful life. Oh, yes, absolutely. But not everybody has. And that's a very selfish attitude for them to sit causally in their little corner while the rest of the world is suffering immensely.

[26 : 06] That's characteristic of the kingdom of evil. I come first. And if I'm happy, then that's all that matters. And that's just a reflection of the selfishness that is in it.

Yes, when you stand at the grave of a fellow believer, remember the victim. That's why again, Paul says, thanks be to God, because the victory has been won.

So I must bash on. I'm taking too long as I always do, but I'm getting very excited by all this because it's wonderful. Why do we have this victory? What is the necessity of this? Well, in one sense, we've answered this question is all to do with this conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. And in one sense, God engages in conflict because he has an absolute hostility towards sin. He's a holy God. And we've seen this many times in our study. He cannot tolerate sin at all. But that's not the whole story. God does not just engage in this conflict because he hates sin. This is where it's very important that we grasp the order of events that take place. So here we have the kingdom of God. Here we have the kingdom of evil.

Okay. Is crucial that we recognize the order that things happen. Our natural state is to be here. We are born subjected to a world that is fallen. And so we add as much as we don't want to be, but maybe some people don't even care, we are born in a natural state of darkness as Colossians 121

says, we were once alienated and hostile in mind. So now this is really significant. The conflict is between these two, okay, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil. That's where the conflict lies. That's where the battle line is. We are not spectators. We are on this side by nature, the wrong side, the evil side. And if you think in terms of conflict, we are the enemy. So we should be destroyed.

We should be defeated. We should be obliterated. And yet the New Testament wonderfully tells us that while we were yet enemies, while we were on this side, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son. God, yes, he defeats the kingdom of evil, but in the process, he rescues us and he saves us. This is brought out in these passages. That should disappear.

[29 : 04] Colossians 1:20, through whom to reconcile himself all things whether in our current heavenly peace, whether in the cross, you once alienated and hostile in your mind and he is now reconciled in the body of his flesh by his death to present you holy and blameless and above the Holy Holy. Back to keep us against a crucial verse, he came to destroy the power of death and deliver those who through fear of death were all the lifetimes subject to slavery. God sees us in enemy territory. We are, as I was saying, we are on this side, the wrong side in the realm of the kingdom of evil, but he sees us there. He sees our helplessness and he is filled with compassion and he rescues us. Now the crucial significance of this is that God does not just engage in this conflict because he has a perfect hate for sin. God also engages in this conflict because he has a perfect love for you and he is one this victim because he wants you on the side. He's delivered us from the dominion of darkness, domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. He engages in this conflict because of his love for us. Okay, how does it all this work? We're going to get a little bit more in detail. I hope this will fit together quite nicely now, hopefully.

Okay, in terms of the how, if you ask this question, it actually takes you on a journey right through the storyline of the Bible, through the whole of redemptive history as we call it. As we said at the start, the fall has left the universal state of conflict.

And if you go through the whole Bible, you can see six stages of conquest whereby this is put right. Now, I give credit to John Stott, whose book *The Cross of Christ*, which you should all buy, it's a very good book. It's John Stott's six stages that we're looking at here together. So, stage number one is on your hand out. Conquest is predicted. We read Genesis three. Another example in the Old Testament is Isaiah nine. And to us a child is born to us a son that's given in the government shall be in his shoulder. And the name shall be called wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father the prince of peace of the entities of his government under peace there will be no end and on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. Now, notice the significance of what this is saying.

It's talking about the government and it's talking about the throne and the kingdom that this child is going to establish. This is necessary because the devil at the moment has usurped his way onto the throne of the universe and Christ will come and knock him off and take his rightful place as king. So, the first stage is that throughout the Old Testament, the conquest is predicted. Then in the coming of Jesus, the conquest begins.

Now, if you read through the gospels and you read about Jesus experience, you see immediate opposition from the devil. Jesus is born. What happens? Herod tries to kill all the children in Bethlehem. Jesus begins his ministry. What happens? The devil tempts him. Jesus starts to preach. What happens? Demons possess people immediately confront him. Jesus is constantly facing the opposition of the devil because the devil knows fine what's coming. And it's summed up by these words that Jesus uses. This is where he's been accused of casting out demons by the devil. And he says, if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Remember kingdom language, victory language.

[33 : 19] When a strong man fully armed guards his own palace, his goods are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Now, what does that mean? Who is that? Who's the strong man? Satan.

Satan is the strong man. Satan is the ruler of the world. Satan is the one who has established his kingdom of darkness and his dominating creation. And he can only be overthrown because one stronger has come. Jesus Christ. He will depose the devil. In fact, he has bound him and overcomes him and takes away his spoil. Conflict begins as Jesus begins his ministry.

And then the conquest is ultimately achieved on the cross. And again, we've read Hebrews 2:14 many times. Through Christ's death, through the cross, he destroyed the devil. Now, of course, the devil would have looked at Christ dying and would have noted of thought that he had conquered. But Christ's death was a moment of marvellous, wondrous victory. But it doesn't stop there. The conquest is then confirmed and announced. And of course, the great confirmation of Christ's conquest was the resurrection. We know that Christ's death was effective because death couldn't hold him. And he rose again. The kingdom of evil's greatest weapon is the grave. And it couldn't hold Christ because he rose again. And that is then announced and proclaimed. And then the next stage is that conquest is extended across the whole world because Christ ascends and is exalted at the right hand of God. And the good news of his victory. In other words, the gospel is proclaimed to all the nations.

That's what the message of Christianity is. The good news of victory, the gospel, it's spread all around. And this is the stage that we're still in. And the final stage is still to come, where conquest is consummated. And we read about that in 1 Corinthians 15.

As an Adam all dies, so in Christ, all shall be made alive. But each in his own order. Christ, the first fruits then at his coming, that's when it's consummated. And the second coming goes to belong to Christ. Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom of God to the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. Everything gets put under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, which of course points us immediately to revelation and all the wonderful things that we are told there. The point is that the whole message of the Bible is a magnificent story of victory. If we look at all these stages, this is it, if you like, biblical history all the way through. Here you have the Old Testament, where conquest is predicted. Here you have the gospel narrative, where conquest begins with the temptation and the demoniacs and all these things. Then conquest is achieved on the cross. And then it's confirmed by the empty tomb. That's supposed to be an empty tomb, not a very good picture. But Christ rose from the dead. He is then exalted to heaven to the right hand of the Father and conquest is extended to all the world with the message of the gospel proclaimed through the church. And then final consummation comes at the second coming here. The whole of history, the whole of the Bible is a wonderful message of victory. And it has all been achieved by that cross, by what Jesus has done. And every single block on our diagram is part of that victory. This, if you like, is the strategy through which Christ achieved all of what he was doing. The devil has been cast down.

[37 : 34] That's why we have these wonderful words. The accuser of our brothers has been thrown down and they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb. The devil is utterly, totally defeated. Victory is ours through Christ. I've taken too long and I want to say something about the last question before I finish. No. Because there are four very important implications that I want us to draw from this very, very quickly. You've been very, very patient with me tonight. Victory has changed our status. My status and your status has been changed.

And we can focus on four ways in which that status has been changed. First of all, our status has been changed in regard to sin. Now, Romans six is a magnificent passage in this regard. Don't let sin reign in your mortal bodies to make your vades passions. Don't present yourselves. Your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life. And your members to God as instruments of righteous for sin will have no dominion over you. Since you are not under law, but under grace. Now, this is a crucial statement here. Sin will have no dominion over you. That doesn't mean that sin has disappeared because the consummation is yet to come. But sin is no longer in government. Now, this is just one the other day by Eric Alexander and I heard a magnificent illustration. As he said, he read it with Margaret Thatcher.

And Margaret Thatcher said, Socialism is not dead. But thank God it is no longer in government. And that was her view. And I'm not interested in the political aspect of it, but it's an illustration of this. Sin is no longer in government because the kingdom of Satan has been defeated. But if something is no longer in government, where is it? Where does the Labour Party go if it's no longer in government? Opposition. And so sin is now in opposition to you and to me. It doesn't govern us. It opposes us, which is why we battle with it all the time. But we must remember that our status is different. Sin is no longer in government the one who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. Secondly, victory has changed our status towards the world. The world is no longer this realm dominated by the power of Satan. The world has been changed from a catastrophic mess into a

huge mission field.

And our role is to extend this message of victory to the world. Again, look at what Jesus said when he gave the Great Commission, this is victory language. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. That's the language of victory. And then he says, Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations. So we have two things here. We have an obligation to engage in mission because the victorious King is asking us to do it.

[41 : 05] But we have great motivation as well because he is King and victory is one. And when we go out into the world with the gospel, we're not going out as those who are defeated. We're going out as those who are victorious. And Christ is with us always to the end of the age. We have a wonderful message to proclaim. And this victory should motivate us immensely.

Thirdly, victory has changed our status towards death. If you look at the New Testament, it does not talk about the believers dying. It talks about them falling asleep because death has lost its sting. And we simply fall asleep and step straight to paradise to be with our Savior. It transforms our status towards death.

Oh. How what? The safety of the cross was straight. Yes, safety of the cross. That's what I mean. I don't mean falling asleep and waiting in an intermediate state at all. I don't mean that. I mean that, you know, the language is a figurative in that death is not like if you think death is like victory for the kingdom of evil, because that's what the devil brought in, you know, the fall death was the ultimate consequence of sin. The New Testament doesn't use that language of believers because that no longer applies to us. When we die, we're no longer suffering the the the curse of sin. We are going straight into paradise. Falling asleep is just an image of that. I swear, putting it in that sense. Sorry to be rushing through.

Last of all, victory has brought a change in our status towards God because remember what we said. We were hostile and far away from God. And now we have been brought inseparably close to God our Father. And I cannot put it any better than the words of Romans 8 and the last few verses, who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword as it is written for your sake we have been killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors. Again, notice victory language. So you've never loved us, but I'm sure that neither death nor life, nor interest nor rule, nor business, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, nor death, nor anything else in all creation, not even the kingdom of evil will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That is what we now are because of the victory of Christ.

[43 : 51] Amen.