The Threshing Floor of Ornan

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[0:00] It's done back then to the passage that we read. I think it would be useful if we kept it on screen if you go back to the actual text for a bit anyway at the beginning of chapter 21.

The incidents that we have here with David's censors. Now there is a parallel passage to this in 2 Samuel 24.

And while we have this on screen, it would be helpful for you if you have your Bibles open at 2 Samuel 24. And we'll see one or two differences between the two accounts.

Not that I'm going to spend a lot of time looking at the actual differences, but there are one or two things that require to be pointed out. 2 Samuel 24. It's the last chapter in 2 Samuel.

And again, we are not sure who wrote either of these accounts. It would seem to be two different writers because they don't coincide 100% in everything.

[1:10] Some think Ezra wrote Chronicles and others think that Gad wrote 2 Samuel. But again, we can't be absolutely sure of that.

But the first thing that should draw your attention is that the opening verse in both chapters is different. Samuel 24 says, again, the anger of the Lord was kindred against Israel and he incited David against him saying, Go number Israel and Judah. But in Chronicles it says, then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.

Now, some people point out that there's an apparent contradiction there. That in one case it's God who seems to incite David to do it. And in the other case, it is Satan.

But there is really no contradiction. God does not never incites anyone to contravene his word and his instructions.

And we'll come to that a little bit later on where we see in fact what the instructions for a census actually were. Why does David actually do this?

[2:22] Go number Israel from Bershiba to Dan and bring me a report that I may know their number. Now, you'll notice that in both cases the numbering is different.

And you'll find that the number in one is much greater than it is in the other. In all this, in Chronicles it says 1,100 men and in Judah 470,000.

Whereas in Samuel it says 800,000 valiant men and 500,000. Why the difference? Some people say, oh, there's a standard example of where the Bible doesn't agree with itself.

And why you can't trust the word of God because there are mistakes in it. The answer to that is that the mistakes are probably, there is a mistake, but which one of the two is correct?

It would seem most critics think that the account to the numbers in Chronicles are the more exact numbers. And that probably the accounts in 2 Samuel are what are called copyists errors.

[3:27] If you remember, of course, that many, many times the scriptures would have been copied. And Hebrew numerals are very, very similar. And therefore it would have been very easy to make a mistake in the transcription.

But it doesn't really matter. But what you see is that what he's numbering is not the people, but those who draw the sword. In other words, the armies.

And that gives you a clue right away as to what the sin is. He doesn't include Levi and Benjamin because Joe, the tribe of Levi, of course, did not have soldiers.

There was the priestly tribe and Benjamin was such a small tribe, it wasn't counted within the numbering of Israel for the same reason. And we can see from that that the first sin that David commits here is the sin of pride.

His own pride in knowing how many soldiers he had and what was available for him to use in terms of conquest. Now, this is well on in David's kingship.

[4:36] He is probably at this time already having conquered the city of Jerusalem. He is now installed in the city of David and he is king over the whole of Israel.

And it would seem to be it's not quite at the end of his life, but pretty close to it. And he falls into this particular sin. And so the first sin that he commits is the sin of pride.

Now, why? What else? There was also disobedience and here you're going to have to jump forward to the passage in Exodus. What was wrong with David taking a census?

Here we go. Well, if you go back to Exodus chapter 30, the Lord had given Moses exact instructions as to how a census of the people should be carried out.

And the Lord says here, the Lord said to Moses, when you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the Lord when you number them.

[5:40] And there's not just the key thing that there be no plague among them when you number them. That's the reason why they had to pay what was called the ransom money or to be more correct, a tax that they had to pay.

Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary. The shekel is 20 Gerus, half a shekel as an offering to the Lord.

And then we see that everyone who is numbered in the census from 20 years old are upwards. And you notice that it's male and female. It's not just those who draw the sword. So David disobeyed the instructions and the law on the census in two ways.

Shall give the Lord's offering. The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than the half shekel when you give the Lord's offering to make atonement for your lives. And you see how the word atonement comes in there.

Bear that in mind because we'll come back to that in a little while. You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of the meeting. That is the tabernacle that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the Lord so as to make atonement for your lives.

[6:58] Now the commandment, the law is very strict there on how a census should be carried out. And you see that David pays no attention to that at all. And you remember the warning, the warning about the plague.

And it's coupled also with the idea of atonement. Now if we go back to our text in second Samuel, sorry I'm making you work hard for your money tonight. Then what do you see?

You see Satan standing against Israel, inciting David to number. We see the reasons now connected with the fact that he doesn't follow the process of the law.

Neither does he ask for the atonement money or anything. But he does this even though Joab tries to dissuade him. May the Lord add to his people a hundred times as many as they are.

Are they not my Lord the king, all of them my Lord servants? Why then should my Lord require this? Why should it be a cause of guilt for Israel? And it would seem that Joab had a little bit clearer insight than David at this point.

[8:05] Even though Joab through if you study the character of Joab through scripture, I'm not going to go into that tonight because we don't really have time for that. Joab does, although he follows David instructions, he doesn't seem at times to be to trust implicitly in the God of Israel in the way that David did.

But he realises that there is something wrong here. And you see then in verse 7, but God was displeased with this thing and he struck Israel.

So what happens? We have a situation then that there is a severe consequence and we can run through the next part of it very quickly. We can run through the consequence where David is given the choice of three things.

And again, you notice how often the term three, it's a choice of three things that comes up in scripture. And again, I'm not going to comment on the significance of three because you can think about that yourselves because there are so many things of course connected with these, Trinity, the Exeter and so on and all the rest of it.

Three things he's offered and this is the result of his sin. And you see that throughout scripture and again, especially in this case, when a sin is committed, there is a price to be paid.

[9:24] And that is something that should make each and every one of us think. Every single sin that we commit, there is a price to be paid for it. And in this particular case, God brings directly through God whom we know very little about except that he was the prophet who was along.

You remember Nathan at one time with David. Now he seems to have been succeeded by this chap, God whom we know virtually nothing about. But there is a clear indication as a consequence of your disobedience and your sin.

There is a price to be paid. You see that right from the beginning of scripture. Isn't that what happened when Adam fell that there was a price to be paid in being thrust out of the garden and that price that was paid was that the pain of death would come upon that the wages of sin would be death.

And we see throughout the scripture that if it were not for the atonement that is made for God's atoning process that is made from giving Adam and Eve the coats made of the skin.

It's singular in the Hebrew, the skin of one animal through the shedding of blood. That was the first sign of mercy that was shown and the first sign of an atoning.

[10:49] So here's the choice that David is given. If you move to the next one again, you've given three things. Three years of famine, three months of devastation by your foes, or else three days of the sword of the Lord.

Pestilence on the land, a plague on the land, exactly as it was and what had been said to Moses in Exodus. And the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.

What would you have chosen? Which one would you have chosen? I've often wondered here if, well, you know, three years of famine doesn't seem so bad after all.

I mean, you could have sent people to out like Jacob did, or sent to other countries to buy in food, etc. and so on. And perhaps, you know, maybe that would be the worst of the three evils.

Or three years of three months of your enemies, raids on Israel, perhaps conquest, perhaps a lot of death and a lot of fighting again.

[12:01] I just think I would still go for famine. It seems the easiest one to get round. But then, the three days of the sword of the Lord.

Which one would you have chosen? I can see you all thinking immediately here, would you go along with David's answer, that I would rather fall into the hands of the Lord for his mercy is very great.

But do not let me fall into the hand of man. Now, you see, it's our logical human mind probably went for the famine. Well, mind it anyway.

But when you come to look at what David thinks, you see how repentance from his sin, realising that his sin brings him to put himself into the hand of God and under the hand of God, because when you acknowledge your sin, his mercy is very great.

His mercy is very great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man. So that's what you and I do when we sin. We sin daily in thought, word and deed.

[13:20] Do we put ourselves, do we cast ourselves on the mercy of God for his mercy is very great. Do not let me fall into the hand of man.

There are many things we could say about that, but there are other things in the chapter that I want to look at in detail, so we'll move on. If we move to the next bit, you see that the next piece of the chapter, you'll see that...

the next one, right? Then you'll see that David is not alone here in what he sees. I think we don't have a wee bit there to do.

So the Lord sent a pestilence, 70,000 men. I wonder how guilty David felt about that. He is responsible directly for the death of 70,000 people in Israel.

And it would seem, although it says men, most commentators are of the opinion that that refers simply to people rather than just men. Although it may be men, because he numbered those who were to form his army, those who drew the sword, so it may well be just men that died.

[14:37] Some commentators are of that opinion, but again, you can make up your own mind on that. And you see that it is a plague. It's exactly the plague that was mentioned in the passage in Exodus.

In Exodus 30, that this, because the atonement money had not been paid, a plague would come. And then you get this fascinating passage.

God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but then God relents from the calamity. Why?

He said to the angel who was working destruction, it is enough. Now, stay your hand. Wonder what reason, what answer would you give to that particular question?

Why did God stop it there before it came to Jerusalem? God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw and he relented from the calamity.

Or does it mean, as most commentators seem to think, that God, God, of course, being God, being omniscient, was in fact intending not to destroy Jerusalem?

Now, I intend, personally, I think that's the correct interpretation, but you may disagree with that, because the passage that follows shows us really the significance and the importance of Jerusalem after this.

The angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornon the Jebusite. Now, you'll see in the passage in Samuel that his name is actually given in verse 16.

The angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Aruna the Jebusite. And a lot of people comment and say, well, you know, it's two different people.

No, it isn't. It's the same person. Aruna, the opinion that's given of it usually is that that is the Jebusite, the old Kenanite name for Ornon.

[16:53] And Ornon was his Hebrew name. And it's here that we need to see a little bit more about who Aruna is and or Ornon, who he is, and what is he doing here?

The angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Aruna the Jebusite. Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people and said, behold, I have sinned and I have done wickedly.

But these sheep, what have they done? And you see how he takes the full consequences of the sin on himself. But now we come to the threshing floor of Ornon the Jebusite or Aruna the Jebusite, whichever name you prefer.

Now, who were the Jebusites? Jebusites were a Kenanite tribe who were the inhabitants, the original habitants and almost certainly the original builders of the city of Jerusalem.

This is probably after the time of Melchizedek. You remember Melchizedek meeting Abraham and Melchizedek is king of Salem. And it's reckoned that that Salem was the original city which then became Jerusalem when the Jebusites conquered it and made it their stronghold.

[18:15] Now, they are a Kenanite people. They had never been conquered by the Hebrews, by the children of Israel during the settlement of the Promised Land. But David eventually conquered their city, the city of Jerusalem, and he takes it for himself.

And you'll find that in 2 Samuel chapter 5 if you want to see the details of that later. This guy is not a Hebrew. In other words, he's not a Jew. He's a Gentile.

And we need to bear that in mind. He is a Gentile. Did he worship the same God? Well, that again is questionable. We need to look and see what he says and we'll see that in a moment or two in detail before we can understand this fully.

But it's quite interesting, isn't it? When you look at this, David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven.

And in his hand a drone sword stretched out over Jerusalem. And David and the elders closed in sackcloth and fell upon their faces.

[19:28] That means that the elders also, along with David, saw the angel. I would think that we would have to conclude that, that all of them see the angel.

And then the next question that comes up to us is, did Aruna see the angel if you go to the next bit? And you see the angel of the Lord had commanded God to say to David that David should go up and raise an altar to the Lord and the threshing floor of Aruna and the Jebusite.

So David went up and then you see, now Arna in verse 20 was thrashing wheat. He turned and saw the angel and his four sons who were with him hid themselves.

And why didn't Arna hide himself then? If the four sons were so afraid of the angel of what they saw and they obviously see it from what we've got in the passage there, did Arna see it?

Surely if David and the elders and the four sons saw it, then why wouldn't Arna have seen it as well? But it seems that he's not afraid of it in the same way as the sons are.

[20:34] And he doesn't seem to reverence it in the same way as David and the elders do. And does that mean some critics, some commentators conclude from that that Arna was still a Canaanite worshipper of idols?

But there are others who think that he didn't see the angel at all because he was not a Hebrew. Now I find that difficult to follow.

If his four sons saw it, why wouldn't he see it? Because we assume that if his four sons were also Canaanites, they also would have been worshipping idols in the same way. And therefore their eyes should have been hidden from it, but they clearly see it.

But for whatever reason, you can make up your mind and we can argue about this later over coffee. For whatever reason Arna does not appear to, shall we say, acknowledge the presence of the angel in the same way.

He sees the angel, he turned verse 20, he turned and saw the angel. But he doesn't seem to be either afraid of it or to give reverence to it.

[21:45] Now that should make us pause and think. If you and I were to see the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword standing over Karloé, what would you do?

Would you give reverence to it in the same way? Would you fall on your knees calling out for mercy? Would you confess as David has done, behold, I have sinned and have done wickedly? But these sheep, what have they done? It's an awful thought, isn't it?

Imagine if we were to see the angel of the Lord standing over Karloé with a drawn sword this evening. But there is a sense in which that is actually the case.

The angel of the Lord is standing over the world, not just over Karloé, with the drawn sword of God's justice at all times.

But you notice that he will only exercise that justice at God's command. The angel does not have authority to carry it out without the word of the Lord, without God telling him to do it

[22:55] And then we see this transaction. God has been told to say to David that David is to go and raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor.

And what was special about this particular threshing floor? Well, apparently nothing. But David pays a significant price from it. And again, you will see that there is a difference between the details given in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles.

In 2 Samuel 24 it says, David brought the threshing floor on the oxen for 50 shekels of silver. But it says in Chronicles that he paid 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site.

Now, there is a significant difference between the two there. And the commentator's opinion, unanimous opinion, is that gold and silver are in the wrong place. 50 shekels of gold would be equivalent to 600 shekels of silver.

So gold and silver somehow have got transposed in the copying of the text. Just so that you see again how these apparent errors can creep into scripture.

[24:11] And remember, of course, that we say that God's word was infallible, there are no errors in it. The errors come from copyists. The errors come from copies of the original. The original had no mistakes in it. But somewhere along the line, a mistake was made in the copy.

Some of the mistakes we can reconcile quite easily. We know that 50 shekels of gold was equivalent more or less to 600 shekels of silver. So it's easy to see how the two terms have been transposed.

But the numbering of the people, again, we can only surmise its copyist errors. And there are little things like that in scripture. So beware when people come to you and say, oh, there are mistakes in scripture.

There are mistakes in the Bible. Yes, there are. There are mistakes in these copies of the Bible. There's no mistake in the original. And sometimes the mistakes are translation mistakes.

Sometimes they're copying mistakes. There are little errors and the book of chronicles particularly is prone to errors, especially in numbers. And one of the reasons for that is if you ever have the chance to see the Hebrew script with numbers, they are so similar that one tiny little twiggle at the end of one can make the difference between a zero and a five and so on.

[25:26] So it's very easy to see how mistakes like that could occur. But here now we come to the really important part of the text. And if we run forward now to the first slide of the...

Here we go. Now, I can't see from this side of the light. What is the significance of the thrashing floor of Aruth?

This is where I need my old school pointer to do things. And you can see I'm at the top here, up here, the thrashing floor of Aruth where David's altar was.

Now, you notice also that this is on the top of Mount Moriah. And so often there is a great amount of confusion that people have over Mount Siam, Mount Moriah.

What's the difference between the two? This is Mount Saitin here, where the city of David or the city of Jerusalem was to be built.

[26:35] And in effect what you have was two little hills with a small valley between them. Mount Moriah had no construction on it at all.

Now, you should remember of course that Mount Moriah from the Old Testament was where Abraham had taken Isaac in order to sacrifice him. And you remember of course that there was no buildings at all on Mount Moriah at that particular time.

Because it's there that he finds the ram with his horn caught in the thicket. And remember, it's not a lamb, it's a ram. Why is it a ram? Why is the ram offered instead of Isaac?

Because the ram is full grown. It's a mature offering. It symbolizes of course the offering of Christ Jesus in his full maturity in his ministry at the age of 33 a year.

But again, that's another thing that's all together. And so when Aruna is thrashing here, there is nothing on Mount Moriah. It is simply the top of a little hill.

[27:43] Why was it good for thrashing corn? Because the oxen could pull the thrashing thing round about it and the wind would blow the chaff away. And you would then be left with the grain.

And this part of the city, this was not a part of the city at this particular time. The original city was, sorry, over your head here. The original city is down here. This is the city of the Jebusites, which comes to be known as Jerusalem.

David has now conquered it and he's built his palace. You can see his palace in the middle there. And again, you can see the various details of the things round about.

But there is no construction whatsoever on Mount Moriah. So you have Mount Sion on one part and Mount Moriah on the other. It's like the top of two little hills with a small valley in between the two.

What happens here? David buys the thrashing floor. Why does he buy it? Because he is, first of all, going to build an altar here.

[28:52] And on the altar, he pays for which he pays the full price. He buys the ground, he buys the oxen and he buys the wood of the instrument. And there he builds an altar. And remember, the altar would be simply unhewn stones.

Just ordinary stones, climbed up. The animals laid on top, killed, laid on top of it. Remember, of course, that blood is shed here. Blood is being shed.

You remember what the significance of the shed blood is right here on the beginning. It is through the blood that atonement is made. There is the pattern that you see right from the Garden of Eden, from the Gates of Eden, from the skin of the animal, through the plagues of Egypt, the blood of the first born.

It is the pattern that you see through the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament law. And here it is now about to be fulfilled on the thrashing floor of Arunah.

But what is going to happen here? Well, David then, when he saw that the Lord had answered him at the thrashing floor, he sacrificed there. How did he know that his answer was acceptable?

Because we are told that fire came down from heaven and burnt up the sacrifice. You see that in verse 26. David built there an altar to the Lord, presented burnt offerings and peace offerings and called them on their own, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering.

We have seen that before several times throughout Scripture in the Old Testament. How the Lord answered by fire. And you remember, of course, Elijah at Mount Carmel, how the fire came down on the sacrifice.

You remember Samuel, not Samuel, Manoa and his wife, the mother of Samuel, offering. They didn't know it was an angel of the Lord that they were speaking to, until fire comes down from heaven and burns up the sacrifice.

You see the fire on Sodom and Gomorrah. You see the Lord's using of fire so often to signify his presence and to signify his justice.

His justice is being carried out, but here atonement is to be made. There is a price paid for the threshing floor. It's the full price that is paid.

[31:27] David will not take it for nothing. And it's exactly the same way that a price has to be paid for sin. You and I were bought with a price through the precious blood of Christ Jesus.

And the whole significance of what we see here will take us into another step of God's plan. And we'll see how this develops.

What happened to the threshing floor? What was built there? David, we see in Chronicles 22.1, then David said, Here shall be the house of the Lord and hear the altar of burnt offering for history.

And it was on Mount Moriah that Solomon builds the temple. The first temple is built on Mount Moriah.

You can see that later on in 2 Samuel and so on and in Chronicles how it's clearly stated.

[32:36] What happened to that temple? We are all familiar of course with the destruction of that Solomon's temple by the Babylonians. Then the second temple being built by Sirubbabel on the return from Babylon.

That temple again falls into disrepair and is destroyed during, or partly destroyed during the Maccabean period. And by the time we come to the New Testament, what have we got?

We have Herod's temple. And every single one of these temples is built on exactly the same spot. Now you remember that the temple consisted of two parts, the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place.

And then the various courtyards round about. And the Holy of Holies was exactly on the spot where the threshing floor of Ornon the Jebusite was.

Isn't that amazing? Because also you see how God uses a Gentile in order to provide the holiest sight in Christian history.

[33:42] Throughout the scriptures of the Old Testament and even in part of the New. What's there today? Go back one.

Well there it is in all its glory. But it's not a Christian temple anymore. That is, I thought everybody knew this, but I discovered last night that very few people actually knew it.

It is the Dome of the Rock. And this is a Muslim temple built in the 6th century, the end of the 6th century, when the Muslims had conquered Jerusalem.

And that is what rests over the site of the Holy of Holies of Solomon's temple. Over the threshing floor of Ornon the Jebusite.

Over Mount Moriah where Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac. You see the hill has virtually disappeared and if you go to the next slide we'll see why.

[34:46] The whole space which was between Mount Moriah and Mount Zion was flattened and levelled. When Solomon's temple was built so that it was then a flat area.

And that flat area has been levelled again several times over the centuries until you get it now as it's preserved from the 6th century. That's the Dome of the Rock. This is the Alakzamosk here.

The third holiest site in the Muslim world. Doesn't that make you think that here where atonement was carried out again and again and again.

And the Holy of Holies throughout Solomon's time, throughout David's time, by Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac. That God's promise of atonement is now a place where no non-Muslim is allowed even to enter.

If you go to Jerusalem nowadays you are not even allowed to enter in there unless you are a Muslim. You cannot visit the Dome of the Rock. You cannot see anything that's underneath it.

[36:04] The Muslims have refused Point Blank to have any excavation work done underneath it at all. And of course there is nothing left of what was the original temple there or as it was even in the time of our Lord.

And it should draw our attention to so many things. Even as you consider Ornan, I'm sorry time has flown by but even as you consider Ornan think of this.

God does not need a house to meet with his people. He meets David at the Thrashingfield in the open air. The altar is built in the open air. Even Stephen in his sermon for which he's condemned.

He simply says of Solomon's temple, Solomon built him a house. Nothing else. Doesn't mention any great detail about it. God can meet with his people everywhere.

But there is a price to be paid. And God can only meet with his people when the price of the atonement has been paid.

[37:10] It was here, almost certainly here, that Jesus was led through the judgment hall. Although the judgment hall of Pilate would probably have been down in the city of David.

He would probably have been led through close to the outer temple court on his way to Calvary. And it is there that Jesus is the one who pays the full price of your atonement and my atonement.

That's what atonement is all about. That's what it means to pay the price for. And you think of the word atonement at one meant with God, to be at peace with God.

And in the same way you see the full price of God's justice is paid on the cross. The sword of God's justice. This is something you can think about.

Is it still sheathed? Has it been sheathed now until our Lord comes again, until the judgment day?

[38:18] Or are there times when God's sword of judgment is unsheathed in the world? There's great debate about that of course. And many people argue about that there are certain things that happen that are signs of God's judgment.

But imagine what to deal with us as we deserve. If the sword of God's judgment were to be unsheathed now, none of us would be able to stand before him, were it not for the precious blood of Christ, for the blood that cleanses from all sin.

Spurgeon says this about it. He says, the temple of glory is built on the threshing floor of affliction.

And the more you think about that, the temple of God's glory is built on the threshing floor of affliction.

But our affliction for sin has been turned on to the Lord Jesus Christ. And you and I are thankful that price was paid. And that that is the price that keeps God's sword of justice from dealing with us as we deserve.

[39:35] There will come a day, of course, when our Lord returns again, when the sword of God's justice will be unsheathed. And you see this sword, this is the sword that Simeon speaks of when he says to Mary, Yes, horde shall pierce thy own soul. The sword of God's justice. You see the sword in action at Calvary.

And you see the sword at the cross. This all came from the purchase of the threshing floor of Ornon, the Jebusite.

And many people see this as such an obscure passage in scripture. But you see how it weaves into the pattern of Mount Moriah, from Abraham through to Ornon, through to Solomon's temple, then all the temple history and through to the cross. It all fits together like everything else in scripture, in God's perfect plan of salvation. Well passed our time there.

I'm sure you'll have many questions about that and perhaps we can deal with some of them later. But let's pray. Our Father in Heaven, we give you thanks that you have provided an atonement, that you have provided a way through which we can come to you, through the blood that was shed, that no sacrifice was acceptable to you without blood being shed.

We thank you for all the details that we see in that passage. So many things that we fail to take note of and to understand. But even like David, that we would this evening be in the hands of the Lord and not in the hands of the man.

[41:20] For you are the God of mercy. We thank you for your work this evening that you would bless us to us. In Parkinson's and through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.