

Exodus Chapter 25 v 1 - 22

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good evening. It's good that we have the freedom, the liberty, and the desire to meet together on a Sunday evening. I wonder if you could turn me to Colossians chapter 3 for a moment.

I'm going to read a few verses there. That's page 1184, page 1184, Colossians 3. I'm just going to read a few verses together before we come and sing our first hymn, reminding us of the privilege and the responsibility in one sense of being a church, being God's people, and also what we are doing together this evening. So page 1184, Colossians 3, and I'm going to read from verse 12 to verse 17. Just listen to these truths.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Remember we looked about that this morning, that we do, we are what we are, or rather we do what we do because we are what we are. So I use the illustration of a light. A light gives light because it is a light. It doesn't give light to become a light. So we do what we do because of who we are. We love one another. We are kind to one another, compassionate to one another, because we are God's children, because we are his chosen people, because we are dearly loved. Carrying on then, verse 13. Bear with each other and forgive one another. If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you. Again, there's the repercussion. We have been forgiven, and therefore we do forgive. It's something that's inherent in our experience. Over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.

And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And then verse 17, which reflects really what we were thinking about, particularly this morning. Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. There's an incredible work that God has done in our lives, individually but corporately. We are not saved in isolation. We are saved to be part of the universal church of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also in the expression of that, in the visible local church of the Lord Jesus Christ. But even more wonderfully, if you're a Christian this evening, that you are part of a family that includes all believers on earth, and all believers in heaven. We're already one body, one family, with one heart and one voice, seeking to praise the living God.

Please be seated. Let's come with one heart, one desire, as we come to pray together. Let us all pray.

[3 : 29] What an amazing sight it must be to see you, O Lord our God, in all of your great glory and beauty, loveliness. What an amazing thing it must be for those believers who've gone before us. Some of them we know by name because they were loved ones of ours, family and friends. And let us know that though we do not see them, that Lord, they see you and that they are in your presence. And we thank you, Lord, for the wonderful pictures we have of heaven given to us in the scriptures. Pictures of a place where there is no sin or sorrow or grief or tears or anguish. Lord, those wonderful illustrations where you are seen to be upon your throne in glory and majesty. And before you are all those who you have loved and saved and rescued, rejoicing, singing, celebrating your grace and goodness. We thank you, O Lord, that as Paul was able to say in his letter, to be with Christ is better by far, better than anything else in this world that we can ever experience or know, better than any joy, any celebration, any high. To be with you, O Lord, to be in your presence is beyond compare.

And Lord, we thank you that though we look forward to with joy and with faith and trust and hope that we shall, by your grace, be there in heaven with all the saints, where we shall be there, Lord, to sing your praises and enjoy you for eternity. Yet, Lord, we thank you again that even as we meet together on this Sunday evening, we can know a little bit of that. We can know a little bit of that joy, a little bit of that delight, a little bit of that celebration. Because, Lord, just as your people in heaven know that they have been saved by your grace, so we too know that we've been saved by your grace. Just as they know their sins are forgiven, we know our sins are forgiven. Just as they know that they are children of God, so we know we are children of God. Just as they know that Jesus loves them with an everlasting and unbreakable love, so we know that too. We thank you that our salvation is just as secure as theirs, that we are just as much your people as they are. And yet, Lord, we thank you that you've kept us here in this world, for this generation, for this day, for this time, that we, like them who've gone before, may be faithful witnesses to you, that we might live for your glory and your praise. Just as we thought this morning, thank you, O Lord, that it is your will and desire to be glorified in us and through us. We pray again, O Lord, that's not just here, as we sing these hymns, as we listen to your word, but Lord, that's for our everyday moment, wherever we are, in whatever we do. Thank you, O Lord, that you can and do bring glory to your name in and through us. We pray that you would help us then in that great calling, that great mission, that great purpose for life, that, Lord, as we hear your word and as we gather around the communion table, Lord, that you would cause us to be more and more shining for Jesus, more and more able to reflect something of his beauty and brilliance in this dark world. O Lord, come and meet with us then.

Help us and bless us, we pray, for we ask all these things of you, our God, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen. 25, Exodus chapter 25, that's page 83, page 83, if you've got one of the church Bibles. Just while you're finding that, just a quick, a little correction from the notices this morning. Next Sunday morning, I'll be preaching in the morning, it'll be our Remembrance Sunday, service, and then Frederick will be preaching for me, or preaching for us, rather, I beg your pardon, in the evening. The reason for that is that I'm away at conference, an annual conference I go to with Evangelical Fellowship Congregational Churches. I'm giving, me and Mark Lads are going to be traveling down together, and I'll be away from Monday lunchtime till Thursday tea time, so Frederick very kindly is going to cover the evening preaching. Let's read together then, page 83,

Exodus 25. Just, again, to bring you up to date, we've sort of been doing Exodus in bits, haven't we, and just, I can't remember how long ago it was, a few weeks ago, we looked at the instructions that God gave to Moses concerning the building of the tabernacle, this incredible tent, which was ultimately replaced by the temple that Solomon built, the place where God's people brought their offerings for sacrifice, for the atonement for sins, and where they met with the living God, and God had given them instructions about that, and we're going to read from verse 1 through to verse 22 of Exodus 25, following on.

The Lord said to Moses, tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them, gold, silver, and bronze, blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and fine linen, goat hair, ram skins, dyed red, and another type of durable leather, acacia wood, olive oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones, and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastplate. Then let them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. Let them make me an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it. Cast four gold rings for it, and fasten them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Then make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry it.

[10:06] The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark. They are not to be removed. Then put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law, which I will give you. Make an atonement cover of pure gold, two and a half cubits long, and a cubit and a half wide. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. Make one cherub on one end, and the second cherub on the other. Make the cherubim of one piece with the cover at the two ends. Cherubim are to have their wings spread upwards, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking towards the cover. Place the cover on top of the ark. Put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law that I will give you. There, above the cover, between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you, and give you all my commands for the Israelites. Perhaps very strange words for us, unaccustomed to these things, but with God's grace and help, hopefully we'll begin to understand what God is speaking about, and what it means for us as well, when we come to God's word.

So we're looking at Exodus and chapter 25, and following on from the instructions that God was giving to, or had given to Moses, concerning the building of the tabernacle. And particularly, we're going to be thinking about the ark. I'm sure you've all heard the name Indiana Jones.

Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark. That was the very first of a series of films starring Harrison Ford about an archaeologist who travels the world hunting for ancient relics in the 1930s.

The Lost Ark was indeed this ark that we read about here, that God commanded Moses to make in Exodus 25. The reason Indiana Jones was hunting for the Lost Ark of the covenant was because he wanted to prevent it falling into the hands of the Nazis. This is the film plot. This isn't real life.

In the film plot. He wanted to stop it because Hitler and the Nazis believed that they could have the ark of the covenant. It would give them great power over their enemies. They'd be able to control God's power in some way, and be able to conquer the world.

[12:39] They may have got that idea, if they did have that idea, because when you read about the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament, you find that it was carried into battle. And in fact, in one sense, it was that symbol of God's power that gave victory to God's people over their enemies.

So someone might think the power was in the ark itself. But of course it wasn't. The real power of the ark is something very different to the fantasies or the imagination of the movie makers.

Just very briefly, a few thoughts about this box, this ark, as we're told about it here. We see that Moses receives the pattern, as it were, how to make it.

He's told, make it according to the pattern that I give to you. And it's a box, and if you've got footnotes in your Bible, it'll tell you approximate size. 1.1 meters long, 68 centimeters wide, 68 centimeters high.

Made of acacia wood, that's a strong and durable hardwood, but overlaid with gold inside and outside, with gold rings on its feet so it could be carried on long poles, again, covered with gold.

[13 : 55] Would have been quite a spectacular thing to see. On top it would have a lid, and this lid was not wood and gold, it was just purely gold, solid gold, we're told, decorated with two angels.

Now, when the Bible speaks about cherubim and cherubs, don't think of those sort of baby-type angels that you sort of get in cartoons. Isn't he a cherub when they say to a child?

Well, an angel was a cherub, but it wasn't a little baby-faced sort of cutie with a round tummy. It was one of the Lord's angels, a mighty, powerful, supernatural being.

It was the angels that often were involved in the conquests of God's enemies. He would send his angels, and they would overcome them in various ways.

And these two angels, as it were, had their wings stretched out. They met each other in the middle, looking down on the ark with their wingtips touching. Now, why was this box made?

[14 : 56] What was it all about? Was it just sort of a treasure box? Was it just something sparkly and golden? Well, no, we realize that the reason it was so important, the reason that it was so well-designed and created, was because of what was placed inside the ark itself.

And we read there in verse 16, put in the ark, now this is our translation, the NIV translation, the tablets of the covenant law.

That's how the NIV explains one word, because if you've got the AV or some of the other translations, it'll say place into the ark the testimony. But that's exactly what the testimony was.

The testimony was those two pieces of stone, which later on in Exodus we come across, where God had written his ten commandments, his law, even with his own finger into them.

And Moses placed them in that ark as he was commanded. If we look in the New Testament, the ark is mentioned in Hebrews in chapter 9.

[16 : 04] We're going to be there a bit later as well. And two other items are mentioned as being inside the ark. We're told one of them was the gold jar of manna. Remember when the people were in the wilderness, God provided this marvelous heavenly bread.

And they were told to collect it and put it in a jar and keep it. And also the rod, the staff of Aaron. Aaron was the first of the high priests.

And one time when his position was being challenged, God said to lay down his staff. And it budded, even though it was just a piece of wood, budded and flowered and blossomed and grew almonds on it.

A sign of God's selection of him and his calling to that place. And both these things were told in Hebrews were in the ark. Well, we know that they were to be placed next to the ark in the Holy of Holies.

Because we read about that later in the Old Testament as well. Perhaps they were placed in the ark at a later stage. We don't know. This box, this ark, was placed in the very holiest place in the tabernacle.

[17 : 12] The tabernacle, remember, was like a large expanse. You had an outside area which had sort of like windbreaks all the way around, if I can put it that way. High ones.

And then you had a tent in which you had the holy place and then the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was a place where only the high priest could enter once a year. And in there was the ark and these stones which were the law inside them.

Eventually, when the temple was built by Solomon, the ark was placed there in the Holy of Holies. But eventually it was lost. We don't know when. Very probably when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, 52 BC.

And no mention of it is made later on by the exiles who returned or anybody else. The ark of the covenant was the first part of God's tabernacle to be built.

That meeting place with God. That shows that it was very important. In fact, we could say that the whole of the tabernacle and everything around it was built purely for this ark.

[18 : 19] This box covered in gold. Inside of it were the deeds of the covenant. The agreement between man and God. So that God could be known.

And God could be experienced. So what's it all about? Well, the ark is only mentioned one more time after Hebrews.

It's spoken of in Revelation chapter 11 verse 19. It's actually seen in heaven by John. Remember John, the apostle, gets this amazing vision where he's taken into heaven.

He gets to see heaven. He gets to see Jesus. He gets to see the angels and the believers who've gone before. It's an amazing, mind-blowing thing. Then in chapter 11, as he looks into heaven, we read this.

Then God's temple in heaven was opened. And within this temple I saw the ark of the covenant. You've got to remember that what God told Moses to build in the way of the temple and the tabernacle, we're told by Hebrews as a pattern of the heavenly.

[19 : 26] In other words, there was the reality in heaven that Moses saw and then John saw later. And then there was a copy made on earth, Hebrews tells us.

Just as it was with the tabernacle, so it was with the ark. Moses was to make this ark, remember, according to the pattern that God showed him.

God gave him a glimpse into heaven of the heavenly tabernacle, the place where God dwells, where he is worshipped. So what's it all about?

Well, remember, whenever we come to the Bible, we are looking at one book. We're not looking at lots of 66 separate books that are unconnected. We're looking at one book with one theme, with one purpose.

One God, one way of salvation, one hope, one message. And that message ultimately is always Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of sinners.

[20 : 30] That's why when we read the Old Testament as New Testament Christians, we see it has relevance to us because it's pointing us always to the Messiah who's coming. It's pointing us always to Jesus, the Son of God, coming into the world.

Either it's doing that by prophesying his birth and his life and his ministry, or it's by symbols and signs giving us anticipation for who he will be.

And I want to put to you this evening that actually when we look at the ark, we have again an object, if I can put it away, a symbol, a sign that points us to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It points us to who he is and what he does and what he does for us. And I'm just going to bring out three very simple truths. First of all, the ark tells us something of the very nature of Jesus.

The very nature of Jesus. Do you see that there were two materials that made the ark, wasn't there? There was the wood and there was the gold.

[21 : 31] Two essential elements that made it that one box, that one ark. And I think it's very simple to see that those two elements speak of the very two natures of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was both human and divine.

And if I could separate them, then I'd put it in this way, that the wood speaks of his earthly body, his being, as it were, of this world, human completely and fully.

We know that. The Bible makes that very clear. Hebrews in chapter 2, 17, other places as well. For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way.

There's not many people, of course, who would deny that Jesus was fully human. But, of course, he wasn't only fully human, but he was fully divine. Gold in the Bible always speaks about royalty, dignity, even divinity, godness.

And we know that our Lord Jesus Christ, we're told in Philippians 2, who being of very nature, gods. The wood and the gold were made into one ark.

[22 : 41] But they weren't mixed together in some sort of conglomerate. They were separate, but they were one. And in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the incredible mystery which we call the incarnation, the coming of the Son of God into human form, we have a person, one person, who is truly human and truly God.

Two natures in one person, without confusion, without mixture. Well, that's hard for us to understand. That's certainly what we know when we look at the very person of Jesus.

And, of course, it was essential for Jesus to be both human and divine. Because his job, by the way, his mission was to bring together sinful humanity and a holy God.

How could those two opposites, like two poles or a magnet, ever come together? Well, only through that person who was both human and divine, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's the first thing we see, I think. We see the very nature of Jesus seen in this ark. Why was it made of wood and gold? I think to point to his two natures. And then we see, in this ark, something of the life of Jesus.

[24 : 01] The life of Jesus. Because inside, if I put it that way, in the ark was placed what? The law of God. God's perfect will.

Here's how one commentator puts it concerning this law. We find the law written not on a paper, parchment, or stone, but in the life of Christ.

It was living, breathing, walking. Those commandments which were in the box were God's expression of everything that was good. Everything that pleased him.

Everything that was his will for all people and all humanity. And so when we look at the life of Jesus, we see the one person who fully kept God's law.

The one person who alone did everything that pleased God. Did everything perfectly. Did everything without sin. Hebrews 4.15.

[24 : 57] Speaking of Jesus who was tempted in every way, just as we are. Yet he did not sin. In Jesus' words, in Jesus' thoughts, in Jesus' actions, everything was perfectly right.

He did not sin. Perfectly as God wanted. He outlived God's commandments. He was the incarnation of God's will.

All of us have sinned. We acknowledge that. We know that there is no living person or person who's ever lived, who has kept God's law in heart and mind and action. We have all sinned.

But Christ came to fulfill the law, to do what we could never do ourselves. It goes again to show that he is the only savior. But again, those ten commandments written on the stone that were inside the ark were not just, as it were, a description of what God wants, but actually they were also the terms of God's relationship.

How God and man can be brought together. There are one sense God saying, if you want to know me, if you want to enjoy me, here's what you need to do. Here's the terms of the contract of the covenant.

[26 : 15] Do you remember when we looked at those ten commandments early this year? We saw that in some of them, there were promises of blessing for doing the commandment, for keeping the commandment, particularly in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 6, concerning about making any images.

God said this, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. It's promises. Keep the commandments. Blessing.

But also, remember, there are promises of disobedience. Threats, we might even say. You shall not bow down to worship them, for I am the Lord your God, a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.

So there was the terms of the covenant. The covenant was a binding contract between two parties, and it had to be kept to be fulfilled.

Once again, when we look at the life of the Lord Jesus, we see that in Jesus, we have the one who has fulfilled the terms of the covenant contract on our behalf.

[27 : 30] He's acted on our behalf. God has said, you must do this, this, this, this, and this, if you want to know me. We have all failed to do this, this, this, and this. But Jesus, our representative, our Savior, when he came, he came to do God's will.

He did all the things that we could not do on our behalf, in our place. He kept that sign of the contract so that he became the mediator of a new covenant, we're told, in Hebrews 9, verse 15.

Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant that those who are called may receive the promised internal inheritance now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

And that leads us, of course, to that essential truth, the work of the Lord Jesus. Yes, his life, but what about his death? What was his great mission? What was his great purpose in coming into this world?

Well, the ark of the covenant reveals that to us, particularly when we look at the top of the box. Notice here, it's called an atonement cover.

[28 : 44] Elsewhere, it's called the mercy seat. It speaks to us of the work of Jesus, the work of Jesus, what he came to do, particularly in his death.

It's clear that this is not simply just a top. God doesn't just say, put a lid on the box, does he? To keep these things in. He calls it a mercy seat, an atonement cover.

And later on, we read there in verse 22, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you. We'll come to that in a moment as well.

That name, mercy seat, is what we find if you've got one of the authorized version. Comes from William Tinsdale's translation of the New Testament. In 1530, Luther as well used that same phrase in his translation.

A few years later. It's a noun taken from a verb. The verb is to make atonement. And so the noun is atonement cover, atonement seat, mercy seat.

[29 : 49] Why was it called that? Because there was a day of atonement. Every year, the high priest, on behalf of all the people, was the only person who went into the Holy of Holies.

And on that mercy seat, on that cover, on that lid, that atonement cover, there he would sprinkle blood. He would sprinkle blood to secure the forgiveness of God's people.

Leviticus in chapter 16 actually describes to us what happened on that day and what it was that God wanted him to do and what it actually accomplished.

He, that's the high priest, is to take some of the bull's blood with his finger, sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover.

Then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover. In this way, he shall make atonement for the most holy place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been.

[31 : 02] It's a weird performance, isn't it? A strange thing to do. That he'd go into this tent, this inner tent, where nobody else was, where nobody could see. He'd take on his fingers just some blood and he'd sprinkle them on this gold box.

And somehow, in doing that, God assured his people there was forgiveness for them for the sins that they had committed against God's law. I want you to imagine that that top of the box, the atonement cover, in one sense, was what stood between God and his law.

There was the law of God inside the box. It called out for judgment against people's sins. It called out for God to bring them into a place of punishment for breaking those laws.

But, when the blood was sprinkled on the atonement seat, on the cover, as it were, there was cleansing for those sins. Atonement was made, a price was paid, and the punishment was taken in the place of those people by an animal.

Its blood was shed, its life was given. And of course, we can't help but see that that's what Jesus did as well for us. We are the lawbreakers.

[32 : 20] We are the ones who deserve God's punishment and judgment. And yet, between us and God, there is one who is the atonement cover. There is one who has made atonement for our sins, who's paid for our sins on the cross.

The law calls for judgment. Here's what we read in Ephesians 1. In Christ, we have redemption. In other words, a price been paid.

Through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace, he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. Jesus acts as the in-between, the one who stands in the way, the one who takes the punishment and the wrath of God in our place so that the sin that we've committed in breaking God's law is not counted against us.

Jesus is our atonement cover. One final thing then, dear friends, that we get from Exodus 25. I've already mentioned it, but it's there in verse 22. There, above the cover, between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

The ark symbolizes and tells us about the achievements, the accomplishments of Jesus. What has he accomplished by his death for us?

[33 : 49] What has he accomplished by his perfect life for us? What has he accomplished by becoming human and divine in that one person? He's done this. He's made it possible for us to meet with God.

He's made it possible for us and God to be friends, to be reconciled, to be in fellowship. Later on in Numbers chapter 7, that's what happens exactly as God said it would to Moses.

When Moses entered the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark.

God spoke out from that cover, that box. Yet, of course, we know he's in heaven. But God said there's something special here. I want you to see something special about this ark.

See something special about this atonement cover. That's the only place you can meet with God. That's the only place you can fellowship with God. And so it is with the Lord Jesus.

[34 : 59] There's nowhere else we can meet with God. There's no one else who can bring us into the presence of God. Except the Lord Jesus.

John, as he writes his first letter, chapter 1, verse 3, he says, Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said, didn't he, in John 14, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one can come to the Father except through me. It's through Jesus we meet with God. That's the wonder of wonders. Being a Christian is not simply sins are forgiven and we're going to heaven.

Being a Christian is not simply our lives are turned around so that we now seek to obey God's will. It's not simply that suddenly we have a new hope or a new perspective or a new goal.

What is the main ingredient in the Christian life? It's this. Man and God reconciled. Man and God friends. Man and God in fellowship with one another.

[36 : 05] Man and God enjoying one another's company. Do you know that?

Do you enjoy that fellowship? Is that why you are a Christian? Is it the joy of your life? I know God.

And people say well you're mad. You're crazy. But we know God. He has met with us. We have fellowship with him through his spirit and it's through faith in Christ.

Now I know what you're going to say. What about these cherubs? I've already said about them what they're not. Why are they there? Why are they on top of the box?

Remember God had said you mustn't make any idols haven't he? You mustn't make any statues. Why has he said but you can and you must make these angels?

[37 : 07] I don't really know the answer. I don't really know the answer. People have made suggestions. It could be that each of them represent the two branches of the church the Old Testament church New Testament church joined together looking and enjoying fellowship.

It may of course allude to the ministry of the angels. In 1 Peter in chapter 1 Peter writes that the angels long to look into the things the mysteries of God and the wonder of our salvation.

This is the one that I think and you don't have to of course wherever God is wherever he appears as it were if I'm put it that way particularly in the Old Testament and then again in Revelation there are always angels there worshipping him aren't there?

They're always there worshipping him Isaiah chapter 6 Revelation chapter 4 again in other parts of the Old Testament and it seems to me that these angels there are teaching us our attitude to the Lord bowing down in worship bowing down in worship before him as to what he's done and all he's done for us God is constantly worshipped by his angels and by his saints and he's worshipped because of Jesus because of what he's done because of who he is because of what he's accomplished and because of what he's given when we look at the ark dear friends we're to see something someone much more dazzling much more glorious much more wonderful the person of Jesus and we too are to bow down and worship him

God help us with God him and He's... For true who