

4. The Servant whose Death destroys Death: He brings people to glory

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[0 : 00] Now, if you have the Bibles there, if you turn please to page 613, and we're going to read for the last time this great chapter, Isaiah 53, which of course begins at Isaiah 52, verse 13.

As I said, the chapter divisions of the Bible are not inspired, and this is one of the least inspired of them all, because it clearly begins in chapter 52. So, chapter 52, verse 13.

And with his stripes we are healed.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted.

Yet he opened not his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent. So he opened not his mouth.

[2 : 24] By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days.

The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous.

And he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong. Because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

[3 : 31] Yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Amen. And that is the word of God, and may he bless it to our hearts and to our lives.

This chapter, a great chapter in the Old Testament, has often been the means of the salvation of people. Probably the first one is the Ethiopian, who we read about in Acts chapter 8, making his way back from Jerusalem to Ethiopia.

There, in fact, a very important man, the Ethiopian chancellor. And Philip the Evangelist joined that chariot, and the Ethiopian said, of whom is the prophet speaking?

And Philip, we are told, began at this scripture, and preached to him Jesus. And that is what the chapter is about. But Jesus, who confounds our expectations.

Jesus, who challenges our prejudices. And Jesus, who stands in for us. And today, we are going to look at verses 10 to 12, which tells us that this servant brings people to glory.

[4 : 48] In other words, there is more to come. The ending of the story has not yet been reached. In the church I used to attend in Edinburgh many years ago, remember one Easter there was a wayside pulpit outside it, which said, after Easter, always Easter.

That's the important thing to remember. I always felt it was very unfortunate, it's in the church calendar, the Sunday after Easter is often called low Sunday. You know, we've had the hype, we've had the excitement.

Now let's back to the dreary business of ordinary church services. That's not what the Easter message is about. The Easter message is that because Christ is risen once, he is always risen.

And that's really what these last few verses are about. And I want to say this, first of all. It's important to realize that although God overturns the expectations and prejudices of the world, he

sends his servant, who is also himself.

And that servant is born into humility and obscurity. That servant dies horribly and painfully. That servant seems to have been an abject failure.

[6 : 02] Although he confounds these prejudices, that's not an end in itself. That would not be the gospel. That would be masochism, wouldn't it? As if suffering and as if death were ends in themselves.

The author of Hebrews says the object of all this suffering, the object of all this humiliation, was to bring many people to glory. That's what these last few verses are about.

So it's not simply a good man crushed by the evil of the world. If the story ended with the suffering and death of the servant, that's exactly what it would be. It wouldn't help us very much.

You're lying in a hospital ward with a broken leg. And the guy in the next bed says, Oh never mind, I've got a broken leg as well. Now that will make you dance with joy, won't it?

It will make you throw away your crutches. And similarly, if we simply say God loves us because Jesus died for us, and that's the end of the story, that's not going to help us when we die.

[7 : 01] That's not going to help us when we face suffering and death and tragedy. It's because this leads to glory. Because a new era has dawned. That is what the suffering of the servant leads to.

Death defeated by the cross. Death swallowed up in victory. I want to look at these three verses for a few moments in terms of three contrasts.

First of all, in verse 10, The servant was dead, but now he lives. That's the first contrast. The servant was dead, but now he lives.

He shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. Now you'll notice first of all that his death was not a dreadful accident. His death was not something that the political and religious authorities brought about.

Although they thought they were doing it, It was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. And you'll notice here at the beginning, It was the will of the Lord to crush him.

[8 : 06] And then at the end of the verse, The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. In other words, because he accepted God's will to die for the sins of the world, He is now the executor of that will.

The one who died in agony and shame is the one who now carries out God's will. Now the word resurrection isn't mentioned in these verses, But plainly, the servant is alive.

And that is what lies at the very heart of the gospel. This exciting reality that life has conquered death. That death has no further hold on those who believe in him.

But notice he not only has life in himself, He gives life. He shall see his offspring. In other words, he is going to give life to others who will be his children.

Now way back at the beginning of the Bible story, Or near the beginning, God promised to Abraham that every nation on earth would be blessed by his step of faith.

[9 : 11] That to all nations, to all people, to all languages would come blessing. Isaiah takes this a little bit further as he sees the one through whom this blessing is going to come.

Now to say, one of those to whom that blessing came was an Ethiopian, Who on the day of Pentecost, When thousands and thousands of people heard the wonderful deeds of God in their own language, That was another example of this.

And the book of Revelation tells us that on the last day, Before the throne of God, There will be a great multitude whom no one can count. Before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

And who is the Lamb? The Lamb is the one who died. The Lamb is the suffering servant. The Lamb is the sacrifice, Which brings many to glory. So the lonely sufferer is now the living one, Who has conquered death.

The story of the resurrection is the hope of the world. The story of this servant's vindication, The story of his exaltation, Is what the gospel is about.

[10 : 18] And notice, again in verse 10, His soul makes an offering for sin. Now when the Bible talks about soul, It doesn't mean some disembodied entity within us, It means us.

When the psalmist says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, And all that is within me, Bless his holy name. It means, Everything about me. My soul is me. So the servant gives himself totally.

His whole personality is poured out for sin. He is an offering for sin, Or a guilt offering. What he did exactly corresponds, To what we need.

So he was dead, But now he lives. He's alive, And because of that, He will see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. There's an apocryphal story, About a couple of Roman soldiers, Who were sitting, Drinking, And gambling, In a tavern.

And one of them said to the other, Have you heard about this guy, Jesus? I said, No, I can't see I have. Well he says, You know the story that's going round. He was mixed up in four funerals, And spoiled every one of them.

[11 : 27] That's what Jesus does. He spoils death. He gives life. So that's the first thing. He was dead, But now he lives. Secondly, In verse 11, He was condemned, But now he is the righteous judge.

Notice verse 11, By his knowledge, Shall the righteous one, My servant, Make many, To be accounted righteous. One day, Jesus stood before, The authorities, Of his world.

He stood before, The high priest, Aniston Caiaphas. He stood before, Pontius Pilate, Representing the, Political authorities. He stood there silent, And he stood there alone.

And he was condemned. He was condemned, As unrighteous. He was condemned, As sinful. And by doing so, He took upon himself, Our iniquities.

And I said last week, That iniquities, Is really our sinful disposition, That makes us do the things, That we do. And so the good news, Is that he is the one, Who is going to be the judge.

[12 : 35] Now in what way is that good news? How is it good news, That he is going to judge us? Well, if you go back, To the Old Testament, You'll find that, When the psalmist, Talks about God, Coming to judge, In psalms like, 96 and 98, He says, This is a cause for rejoicing.

Rejoice, O earth, For the Lord, Comes to judge. In a wonderful, Poetic image, The fields, The fields rejoicing, The rivers clapping their hands, The trees dancing with joy.

Because when he comes, He will put everything right. And he will restore creation. See, so often we say to people, Something like this, You're light in a mess, And Jesus will make it all right.

Jesus will sort you out, So to speak. Wouldn't you like to meet him? Now the average person will say to you, You know, I'm getting on perfectly well, I don't want to meet Jesus at all.

He is a non-starter. What the Bible says, Is something very different. The Bible says, You're going to meet Jesus, Whether you want to or not. And one day, He's going to be your judge.

[13 : 42] Doesn't sound very like good news, Does it? But the good news is, That the one who is going to be our judge, Is the one who gave himself for us.

The one who died for our sins. So that when we stand before him, We can be accounted righteous. When we stand before him, He will look at us, Through his own righteousness.

The Bible often uses the image, Clothed in his righteousness. We are, He sees, Not us in other words, But him. Because he stood in for us, We might go free.

And notice the contrast, Again in verse 11, Out of the anguish of his soul, A very powerful word, He shall see, And be satisfied. What will he see, And what will satisfy him?

He will see those, His offspring, For whom he died, For whom he gave his life, Standing before him, In his own righteousness.

[14 : 45] He won't see all our twistedness, And our sinfulness, And our nastiness, And all those other sorts of things. He will look on us, And he will see, If you like a job, Well done.

Remember, God's people on earth, Are not the finished product. When you visit the church on earth, It's like visiting a building site. It's not like visiting a show house. When you visit a show house, It's great.

Beautiful smells, Everything gleaming, Everything wonderful. When you visit a building site, It's messy, It's chaotic, It's dirty, It's smelly. But the architect, Knows exactly, What's going to come, Out of all that chaos.

And one day, Christ is going to look at his church, And be delighted with it. Because he, Because his people, Will stand there, In his righteousness. So the first contrast, He died, But he's now alive.

The second contrast, He was condemned, But he is now the righteous judge. And the final verse, Verse 12, Once he was helpless, In death, And now he is Lord.

[15 : 52] That verse is saying, I will divide him a portion, With the many, He shall divide the spoil, With the strong. That's not a very good translation, Because that almost suggests, The way it's written there, That he's going to be, One of the top guys.

I will divide him a portion, With the many. And when the great ones, All sit there, Jesus will have a place, Among them. Now that's not, What the gospel says at all. Be much better translated,

Something like this.

Therefore, I will give to him, The many, As a portion, And the strong, As a spoil. In other words, He's not going to be, One of the rulers, Of the coming world order.

He is going to be, The ruler. He is going to be, As revelation says, King of kings, And lord of lords. He is going to be, The one authority, To whom all judgment, Has been given.

And he is the one, To whom every knee will bow, And from whom, Every authority, Will come. So he is going to be, The world ruler.

[16:58] The one who died, In agony and shame, Who was helpless, Is now lord. But there's more to it than that. Look at the very end, Of the chapter. Yet he bore the sin of many, And makes intercession, For the transgressors.

He is also, He is also, The great high priest, Who at this moment, Prays and intercedes, For his people. Now if you, Study the God of the Bible, And listen carefully, To what the Bible says, You'll discover always, These two aspects of God.

His authority, His power, His greatness. The fact that he is, Far above us, The one whom the psalmist says, Fall down and worship. But he is also the one, Who comes right down, Among us. He made intercession, For the transgressors. That is the, And that's what this chapter is about. Now Isaiah, Writing this, Some 700 years, Before these events happened, Could actually, You imagine, Have been sitting, At the foot of the cross.

Because these are the words, Of God. And these are the words, Of the gospel, Of the servant, Whose death, Destroys death. So we come back, To the question I raised, At the beginning.

[18:19] The question indeed, Which the Ethiopian raised, Of whom, Is the prophet speaking? And there is only, One person, In the whole of history, Who fits this chapter.

Because this person, Is the arm of the Lord, As it says at the beginning. And the arm of the Lord, Is a word used, Of the power of God, Of God himself. But he is also, The servant of God.

And he makes intercession. In other words, He is somebody, Who is one with God, And one of us. I heard about somebody, Who was converted, Through reading verse 6.

All we like sheep, Have gone astray, We have turned everyone, To his own way. The Lord has laid on him, The iniquity of us all. What he says, Is I went into that verse, At the first all, All we like sheep, Have gone astray.

And I came out of it, At the second all, The Lord has laid on him, The iniquity of us all. We are all sinners, But we can all be righteous.

[19:20] Now if there is anyone here, Who has not gone, Who has not come out, At that second all, This is a wonderful time, To do so. We are sinners, But there is a saviour, Who has stood in for us.

And a saviour, Who will one day, Be our judge. It is my prayer, That our study of this great chapter, Will have brought us, Face to face, With Christ himself.

Christ who is both, One with God, And one of us. Amen. Let's pray. God our Father, How we praise you, For the words of this old prophet, So not just your words to him, Thousands of years ago, But your word to us now.

And how we praise you, For your servant, The Lord Jesus Christ, Your son and our Lord. And we pray indeed, That we may rejoice, In this Easter faith, Rejoice that he who died, Is now alive, That he who suffered, Is now enthroned in glory, And that in glory, He makes intercession for us, And will one day, Receive us, Into that place himself.

So bless us now, As we go about our business, In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[20:48] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.