

3. The Restoration of Glory

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn once again to our reading, which is for the third time in this 12th chapter of John's Gospel, page 899 in our church Bibles. As you're turning that up, you'll notice that on the back of the sheets today we have some information about our Good Friday sacrificial offering. We have, as you know, a lunchtime service on Good Friday every year, so we'll be here on Friday. And if you're able to come back and join us for our last study here in this chapter of John, you'd be very welcome indeed. It starts a little earlier, one o'clock, not quarter past, and goes on a little longer just to allow us to sing some Easter praise as well as to hear the message. At that service every year and over the Easter weekend, we always gather up a special offering. And there's an opportunity today also at the end of the service, if you'd like to give to that, to do so. You'll see there it's to support the work of Scripture Union in the Glasgow Schools area here. So that information there for you. Do come on Friday if you're able.

But let's turn now, shall we, to read in John's Gospel, chapter 12. We've read this long passage twice. We're just going to read today a shorter section from verse 27 through to verse 33. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this purpose, I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name. And then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again. The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered.

Others said, An angel has spoken to him. Jesus answered, This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. And he said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. Just keep your Bibles open. And notice especially that last verse that we read there. Here is the Lord Jesus Christ just days before his death.

[2 : 2 8] And he is telling us plainly what his death was really all about. Now that means we don't need, do we, the documentaries from the BBC that they always put on on Good Friday, paid for by your taxes and mine, by the way, let's not forget. Documentaries so often ignorantly opining about these things. As though some 20th century skeptical broadcaster could know better than Jesus himself, what Jesus was actually doing. You may have read already that this year, that documentary at 12 o'clock on Good Friday is going to be by Melvin Bragg. And it's supposedly telling us the true story of Mary Magdalene. Really is extraordinary that an intelligent man like Lord Bragg could so demean himself by such stupidity. And it's very sad, isn't it, that the BBC is making that its main Easter offering at 12 o'clock midday on Good Friday, the holiest time of the Christian calendar. We have another piece pouring great scorn on the biblical account. Could you imagine them screening an account about Muhammad's sexual relationships with underage girls and doing it in the middle of Ramadan? No fantasy on that, that's a matter of historical fact, but they wouldn't do that, would they? Let's forget the nonsense in our discredited media today and the rubbish that they talk, and let's focus instead on the words of Jesus himself, recorded by eyewitnesses and earwitnesses, whose testimony in these words is probably better attested than almost any other historical document that we have to hand today. Don't forget that. Here we have the words of Jesus himself telling us what kind of death he was going to die. Now we've already seen that according to Jesus, his death was a revelation of glory. Indeed, it was the climactic revelation of God's glory to this world. Verse 23, the hour has come, he said, for the Son of Man to be glorified. The true and ultimate glory of God Most High is seen on earth in the cross of Jesus Christ. That's what he means. Second, we've seen that Jesus' death is the road to glory. It defines the road for his people to follow him in this world and to find that glory that is to come. It is, as he says in verse 25, the pattern for our salvation.

Whoever loves his life will lose it, but whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. It's the pattern for our salvation and Jesus says it's the pattern for our service. Verse 27, if anyone serves me, he must follow me. But of course, Jesus has more to say and I want us to focus today on verses 31 and 32. These verses get to the very heart of the meaning of the cross of Jesus because here Jesus is telling us that the cross is the restoration of glory. It delivers the complete restoration of God's glory for this world. And it does so because the cross of Jesus affects a mighty purpose. It accomplishes a great and indeed a cosmic salvation. It achieves a marvelous deliverance for all God's people. You see, Jesus' death, according to him, is not glorious because it's the epitome of self-denial, because it's the greatest display of human love, although it is that most certainly.

It's not glorious because it displays what is the most noble ideal of the human spirit, that of self-sacrifice for others. Although again, of course, it is that and it does that. But that is not getting to the very heart of it. According to Jesus himself, right here in this words, words that he spoke just before his death, his death is glorious because primarily of the uniqueness of what it accomplished. The great restoration that God had promised his people right from the very beginning. And these two short verses sum it up very succinctly for us. There are three things that Jesus' death will accomplish in order to bring the restoration of God's glory in the world, which he created for glory, but which fell from glory so tragically because of man's rebellion and rejection of God's good and gracious rule. So let's take these three things in turn. First, you see, Jesus' death brings a restoration of glory because the cross, and on the cross, the rebellion of this world is judged forever. Verse 31, now is the judgment of this world. What does Jesus mean by that? Well, all the way through John's gospel, that word judgment, crisis, it's the word in the Greek, it's where we get our word from. It's used right through the gospel in two senses, and both of these senses are meant to be understood here. First of all, in the sense of judgment as a verdict, a verdict that plainly exposes the truth about the world. The cross of Jesus exposes the world in its rebellion against God. And the cross passes judgment on the world in the sense that it gives that very clear verdict. It displays to the whole universe man's scorn of his maker. It epitomizes the defiance of man for God, the defiance that is there in the heart of man in every age of history. You see, it's the cross, isn't it, that gives the lie to the idea that many people have when they say, well, I'm not really against God. Now that lie is exposed at the cross because here man is seen to be totally against God when human beings are actually faced with God in the flesh, in reality, right up close and personal. And when people are faced with God right up close and personal in the person of Jesus, they want him dead. They want him away, out of sight, and silenced. It's easy, isn't it, for people to say, oh, I've got nothing really against God. Maybe that's what you think. Maybe you're somebody who's been brought here by your friend and you've said to your friend when they've tried to talk to you about Jesus, well, I'm not hostile to God, I'm just agnostic. But you see, what happens when people are actually faced front on with God in particular, not just God, in theory, when they're faced with the unique and the exclusive claims of the Lord Jesus Christ? What happens when society is faced with the demands of Jesus, the unique Son of God, with his holy standards for life and for morality and for behavior, for example?

Or with his unique pronouncement of a unique way to find God and to be faithful to God, one and only? Well, what happens? Well, the answer is very clear, isn't it? People say, well, we don't want that kind of God at all. We're happy with God in theory, but we don't want this God. We don't want Jesus. We don't want him. We don't want his words. We don't want his demands, not at all. God in theory, yes. Bit of religion, bit of piety, but not this Jesus stuff. And you see, the gospel of the real Jesus, the gospel of the cross, confronts people and it forces that truth right out into the open. You can't hide.

[11:00] It reveals that judgment, that verdict about the world and its real response to God. And the verdict is clear. The world is in rebellion against this God. The world has rejected this God, the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. He came to his own, says John chapter 1, but even his own received him not. The world rejected Jesus Christ, the revelation of God.

God. And the cross of Jesus, his death at the hands of those who he had created, that exposes more clearly than anywhere else the reaction of this world to its maker. And the verdict is clear for everyone to see. His own receives him not. And yet Jesus does go on to say that to all who did receive them, he gave them the right to become children of God.

And that can be only because the cross is also a judgment on this world in another sense. It was a judgment in the sense of condemnation, in the sense of real punishment for sin.

You see, when the world's hatred for God and opposition for God and rebellion against God throughout all history was at last exposed so completely, so ultimately in the rejection of the Son of God himself in the flesh, when the verdict had become utterly incontrovertible, then that verdict demands condemnation. It demands punishment.

God's justice must be seen to be just. No longer can that rampant rebellion be passed over, as in his forbearance God had passed over former sins. No, he must now show his righteousness, his justice at the present time, says Paul in Romans chapter 3. Now judgment must fall to show that God is just, to show that God is not just unjust or that he's twisted or that he's weak.

[13:23] In just the same way as a human court and a high court judge must pass sentence when the evidence has been overwhelming and the verdict has been delivered guilty for some heinous crime. He must punish, otherwise there'll be howls of protest, rightly so, from the public.

Now must be judgment on this world. Man's sins demand it. That's the cry of heaven and earth against mankind for its response to the Son of God in the flesh. And now, says Jesus here in verse 31, now is judgment on this world. And yet that judgment upon the world did not fall upon the world, because Christ himself took the place of rebel sinners. What did John the Baptist say?

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Because for Jesus, it was judgment as condemnation and punishment for sin. The sin of the world that had rejected and scorned him and led him to die. And that's why the horror of it nearly overcame him. That's why in verse 27, he cries out, now is my soul troubled. That word means deep anxiety and agitation. It means horror, deep revulsion. Now is my soul convulsed at the thought of this? Because he and he alone knew the full horror of that death. Not death physically, but death as the wages of sin, as the punishment of God. And it was that burden, the burden of judgment for the sins of the world bearing down upon him, that was what convulsed him.

The judgment on this world became the judgment on Jesus. God's just and holy anger against man's sin fell on him. Now it's true that that idea is unacceptable to so many people today, even in the professing church we find today. Some people just can't cope with the idea that God could actually judge sin at all, far less that he could be doing something like that in condemning his own son.

There's nothing modern about that view. Look at verse 38. John's quoting from Isaiah the prophet. He says, Lord, who has believed what he heard from us? They couldn't believe it even back then, in Jesus' day or in Isaiah's day. But nevertheless, Isaiah went on speaking with absolute clarity.

[16:22] God's holy Messiah, he said, was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. By his wounds, we are healed. Can't get clearer than that.

Jesus' death accomplished the judgment on this world. And through his death, the rebellion of this world is judged forever. Our sins were cast out at the cross forever.

That's the first thing, but it's not the only thing. Jesus' death also brings a restoration of glory because on the cross he says, Satan was cast down forever. The ruler of this world is defeated forever. Now is the ruler of this world to be cast out. See, not only does the cross do away forever with the guilt of sin in those who believe because he has borne away all the judgment of God, but it destroys the power of sin and indeed the author of sin, the devil himself.

On the cross, Paul tells us in Colossians 2, Christ disarmed rulers and authorities. He put them to shame, triumphing over them in his cross. He disarmed the devil and he shattered his hold upon the world.

He shattered his hold over his redeemed people. To put it another way, Jesus not only banished the sins that we are addicted to, but he banished the very addiction itself. He banished the very thing that gives the pusher the power, the control over somebody's life. And so that pusher is utterly disarmed. He can't own us anymore. He's cast down. That's why Paul can say in Romans 6, sin shall no longer be your master if you're in Christ. It's why he can say that there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Because Satan, the great condemner, is overcome. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out?

[18:47] If you remember in C.S. Lewis' Narnia story, there's that great point, isn't there, in the line, the witch and the wardrobe, when after Aslan's death on the stone table and he rises again, the power of the white witch who controls all of Narnia is broken. And that endless winter is

banished. And the spring of new life begins to flourish everywhere. Jesus' death restores his people from the bondage of sin. Because he frees us from the guilt and the power of sin over us.

The cross has set us free. There's another wonderful picture of that in the book of Revelation, in John's vision in Revelation 12 of Satan, the accuser who stands before God all the time, accusing the brethren of their guilt and sin, reminding God of our crimes against him and reminding us. And John sees him cast down, overcome by the blood of the Lamb. That's why we can sing that hymn that says, When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, I look to heaven and see him there, who made an end of all my sin. At the cross, the ruler of this world is defeated forever.

Because our sin is cast out forever, Satan is cast down forever. But third, Jesus, he says, Jesus' death brings the restoration of glory because our Savior is lifted up at the cross forever. The Redeemer of this world is exalted forever.

He who is the great Savior of men is enthroned as the righteous judge and ruler of all men. I, says Jesus, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

[20 : 51] Again, there's a deliberate ambiguity there. The lifting up refers, of course, to Jesus' coming crucifixion. He'll be lifted up on the cross. But it also refers to him being lifted up and exalted in glory.

Isaiah, the prophet, saw the Lord and the Lord alone high and lifted up. And yet he also saw the servant of God, the Messiah, high and lifted up, and therefore exalted through his agonies.

And Jesus' exaltation isn't the reward for the cross. Jesus' exaltation is inherent in the cross. It is Jesus' death that exalts him in a new and a marvelous way.

Because in the cross, our God shows himself to be more in a way than he was ever known to be before. It's in the cross, says John, that the fullness of our God's grace and truth is revealed.

That our God is the exalted Redeemer. That he's the great Savior. That our God is the God who is exalted because he gives everything that he has for us, his people.

[22 : 05] And that's why the cross of Jesus sets the Son of God high above every other pretender as the unique, glorious revelation of God in this world.

The God who is Savior. At infinite cost to himself. The God who saves in order to restore his people and his world forever. No other God claims this.

But this God, the true God, his great glory is that he is our Savior. And in his death, says verse 32, he will draw all people to himself.

Again, there's two senses in that. He is the Savior. He draws all people to himself in saving mercy without distinction, without distinction of race or color or age or background or creed.

All through John's Gospel, we see that. There was Nicodemus, the Jewish professor. Then there's the Samaritan woman. A half-breed. A loose woman.

[23 : 19] And in chapter 12, verse 19 here, the whole world has gone after him. Then we're told in verse 20 that the Greeks, the Gentiles, were coming to him. He draws all without distinction to his offer of mercy.

But because of his death as a Savior for sin, even for the world that hates him, such people can find in his great love and mercy the restoration that he brings to this world.

But just as importantly, there is a sense in which Jesus' death and exaltation draws all people to himself without exception. Because by Jesus' death, there is at last restoration of the true ruler and judge at the heart of our human world.

He is lifted up in high exaltation to have all power and authority so that he will rule and judge all men without exception. The time is coming, Jesus said back in John 5, when all the dead will rise and hear his voice.

Some will rise to the resurrection of life eternal. But others, he said, will rise to the resurrection of judgment that is eternal.

[24 : 41] He will draw all people to himself to face that last judgment. And without that judgment, this world cannot be restored to its true glory. Where all rebellion, all sin is done away with forever.

And none who refuse him and his gracious rule can remain in his kingdom. Or it wouldn't be glorious. That's what it means, you see, that the ruler of this world is exalted forever.

The redeemer is lifted up to be the ruler and judge eternal. So as C.S. Lewis put it, In the end, that face which is either the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned on each one of us.

Either with one expression or the other. Either conferring glory inexpressible. Or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised.

Again, it's what he portrays so graphically in the last battle. When people see the face of Aslan. Some seeing him with joy, rushing towards him.

[25 : 51] Other looking with horror and turning away. I, when I am lifted up, will draw all people to myself. So friends, don't make any mistake.

Jesus' death achieves a mighty purpose. The rebellion of this world is judged forever. And our sin is cast out on the cross. The ruler of this world is defeated forever.

And Satan is cast down forever at the cross. And the redeemer of this world is exalted. And our savior is lifted high forever. Through the cross.

Through the cross, darkness is defeated. And Eden is restored. And that's why the Easter gospel is glorious good news.

Because it proclaims the glory of God restored for this world. And restored in this world forever. But to stand before him with joy and to share in that glory of the exalted savior.

[26 : 56] On the day he comes to judge all men. And to usher in the glory that is eternal. To stand before him with joy and to share that glory then.

You must. You must bow before him and acknowledge that exalted lordship now. Today. But why can I ask.

Why would you ever want to do otherwise? And this is the truth about the God who made you. Who was willing to give everything.

And go to the cross in order to restore you and me. To the glory of his eternal kingdom. Why would you ever turn your face away from a God like this?

Let's pray. Heavenly Father. Father. How we thank you for. What was achieved. On the cross at Calvary.

[28 : 03] Help us we pray. With open hearts. And with willing lives. To embrace. The message. Of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To bow down before him today. To make him ours. That we might share in that glory to come. For we ask it in his name.

Amen.