

A Great Deliverance: Restoration of the True Kingdom of God

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[0 : 01] But we're going to turn now this morning to our Bibles and we're back again as we've been for the last few weeks in John's Gospel and we've been looking together in some detail in John chapter 12.

And we're going to turn back there this morning and we're going to read together the section which ought to be very familiar now, beginning at verse 20. The last line of verse 19 gives us the lead in.

Look, say Jesus' opponents, the world, the world has gone after him, after Jesus. And John says then in verse 20, Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks, Gentiles.

So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, So we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew.

Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

[1 : 19] But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

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 heard it.

They said it had thundered. Others said an angel has spoken to him. Jesus answered, The voice has come for your sake, not mine.

[2 : 25] 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, I will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever.

How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? So Jesus said to them, The light is among you for a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light. Lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Well do turn with me in your Bibles, once again to John's Gospel and the 12th chapter.

[3 : 44] We come again on this Palm Sunday to John chapter 12, where we've been listening to Jesus himself explaining the real message of Easter.

In his own words, and just days before he goes to the cross, he knew his death was approaching. He says there in verse 23, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

The hour of glory has come, and yet look down to verse 27 there. That is clearly very troubling also for Jesus. An hour that he had to resist very hard, praying to be saved from.

Verse 31 says it was an hour of great conflict. It was of judgment, of casting out the ruler of this world through Jesus' coming death.

Verse 33, he said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So Jesus is predicting his death, but crucially, he is also explaining clearly what that death was all about, what his death meant.

[5 : 06] And as we've noted already, his focus is not there on the process of the death, by crucifixion or its pain, but his focus is very clearly on its purpose, on its significance.

And that is a really important question. What was the point of Jesus' death on the cross 2,000 years ago? Was there any point at all?

Some would say the answer to that question is, well, no. It was a sad death. It was a pointless death. It was a terrible preventive death of somebody who could have lived on to do so much more good in the world if only things had been different.

A pointless death, rather like, people use that language, don't they? A pointless, tragic death of somebody who's murdered, say, in their 30s, as Jesus was. And there's a lot of confusion today about the death of Jesus.

Not just outside the church, not just among people who know very little of Jesus Christ, but even inside the professing church, for those who ought to know a lot better.

[6 : 17] So thankfully, we have in this chapter, in Jesus' own words, Jesus telling us exactly what his death really means.

And we saw first of all, didn't we, that his death will be a great declaration to the world. will reveal the glory of God uniquely and ultimately.

That's clear in verse 23. Look, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And again in verse 27, for this purpose I've come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

The cross of Jesus declares to our world forever the greatness of God, the victory of God, the sheer glory of the one true God of heaven.

The glory of the everlasting triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is declared supremely to our world in the death of the Son of God. Astonishing as that may seem.

[7 : 19] It's a very antithesis of what verse 43 speaks about here, the glory that comes from man. But this is the glory that comes from God.

Quite, quite different. So the darkest hour for this world when evil men crucified the Lord of glory was in fact the most glorious hour that revealed the divine light of life here in this world forever.

But as we saw last time also that has huge implications for everyone who would belong to God, who would be part of the true people of God, the people of faith.

Because Jesus teaches us here that the cross is also a great definition. It defines the only road for the true people of God. That is, the cross of Jesus sets a defining pattern for all true salvation.

Look at verse 25. whoever loves his life will lose it. Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. The pattern of the cross you see defines the road to salvation with Jesus for every person.

[8 : 36] And it also sets a defining pattern for all true service of Jesus. Verse 24. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone.

but if it dies it bears much fruit. And so verse 26. If anyone serves me he must follow me.

In that pattern of life. The pattern of the cross. But Jesus then goes on here to show in verses 31 and 32 that his death declares God's true glory it defines his true purpose because above all his death achieves a mighty purpose.

Through Christ's death and indeed only through Christ's death comes a great deliverance. it's through the cross of Jesus that he brings restoration to the true kingdom of God.

It's this hour the hour that the whole of Jesus' life have been leading up to. It's this hour which is the glorious hour of restoration. It's the hour that delivered at last nothing less than the complete restoration of the glory of God to this world and for this world the world that he made for that glory.

[10 : 05] So these verses make it absolutely clear that the death of Jesus on the cross affected God's mighty purpose. It actually accomplished a wonderful cosmic salvation.

It achieved a mighty deliverance for all God's people forever. forever. That's so so important for us to understand. The death of Jesus is not just glorious because it's the epitome of self denial.

Because it's the greatest display and the example of human love. Although it is that most certainly. And it's not glorious just because it displays what is the most noble idea of humanity that we should all aspire to that of self sacrifice for others.

Although of course it does that too. And Jesus himself said greater love has no man than that he lays down his life for his friends. But none of that gets to the heart of what Jesus says the cross is all about.

According to Jesus himself here in his own words the death that he knew was approaching it would be glorious primarily because of the uniqueness of what it accomplished.

[11 : 27] The glorious restoration that God had promised right since the very beginning of this world's disastrous fall into rebellion and under God's curse. You read the opening chapters of the Bible story in Genesis chapter 1 and 2.

You read there don't you of the world as it was meant to be. As God created it to be. God created the whole world and he created a perfectly ordered world.

He created a wonderfully good world. Genesis 1 and 2 give us a picture, a wonderful picture of a world that is in perfect harmony. Perfect harmony in nature, perfect harmony in humanity, and above all, perfect harmony between human beings and God our creator.

But by the time you get to the end of chapter 3 of Genesis it's a very different story. Mankind's insistence on our own self-rule, on autonomy from God, our insistence on being able to do life our way, that is what left the world as we know it today.

A world of total fracture in every relationship on this earth. That's our world, isn't it? Fracture between individuals, fracture and disputes within society, between nations, and of course fracture in nature itself.

[12 : 57] Ours is a world that is out of control, it's full of disorder, it's full of division, it's full of evil. So we live in a world now where man, mankind is the measure of all things, and the result is a world world where everything, well including man himself, everything ends up turning to dust.

And man himself is a glorious ruin. That's the phrase that Francis Schaeffer used. Yes, we do see glory in humanity, yes we do, reflecting still the goodness of God.

God. But at best, it's a very passing glory, isn't it? That's the message of Ecclesiastes that we were studying recently. Everything turns to dust in the end, vain, vain, fleeting is life and human life.

We can't argue, can we, with Shakespeare when he makes Macbeth say that life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his ire upon the stage and then is heard no more.

We know that's true. And it is the great tragedy of our existence. But in these two brief verses, 31 and 32 here in John chapter 12, Jesus himself tells us three things that his death accomplishes so as to bring complete and glorious restoration of this disastrously fallen world.

[14 : 29] And it's something that deep in every human heart there is a longing for that restoration. And God has promised that it will be so for every single human being who loves him, who trusts him, and who puts their faith in him.

And so there could be no more important message, could there possibly be, for our world today, at this Easter season. So let's look at these three things in turn this morning. First of all, Jesus says that on the cross and through his death, the rebellion of this world is finally judged forever.

Verse 31, now is the judgment of this world. And what does Jesus mean? Well, all through John's gospel, that word judgment, it's the word in Greek, crisis, where we get our word crisis from.

And all the way through the gospel, it's used in two different senses. And I think both of these are to be understood in what he says here. First of all, in the sense of judgment as a verdict pronounced.

A verdict that publicly exposes the truth about our world, as a world that is undeniably in rebellion against God.

[15 : 47] The cross of Jesus exposes the whole universe and its scorn for its maker. The scorn of humanity for our maker.

The cross of Jesus epitomizes mankind's defiance of God, which has been true of mankind all through history. Now, you see, it's easy to say, and people often do say, well, I'm not really against God.

I've got nothing against God. I'm just agnostic. But the question is, what happens when people are actually faced with God?

Not in theory, but actually up close and personal. Now, that's what happens when people are faced with the unique claim of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

What happens when society is faced today with the unique and authentic demands of Jesus as the unique Son of God? When they're faced with His holy standards of life and of morality and of behavior and so on, and matters of sexual fidelity?

[16 : 57] The reality of marriage between one man and a woman, male and female. We're faced with the binary biblical reality that there is male and female and there is no confusion.

What happens when our society is faced with the call for a unique faithfulness to Jesus Christ as the one and only way to the truth and to life? The one and only understanding of the reality about God, not multiple religions, multiple ways to God.

Well, we know the answer to that, don't we, in our society? When that claim faces the world, the world says we don't want that. We don't want that God, not Jesus.

We don't want that kind of extremism, fundamentalism, not at all. So in theory, yes, we're okay with God. We don't mind a bit of religion, but none of this unique stuff about Jesus.

We can't have that kind of dangerous extremism. You see, when the gospel of Jesus Christ, the real unique Jesus Christ confronts people, forces that truth right out of the open, we see a reaction.

[18 : 14] And it reveals a judgment. It reveals a verdict about the world. And that verdict is clear. It shows us that this world is in rebellion against its maker.

It's in rebellion against God revealed in Jesus Christ. And it hates him so much, it wants to kill him. Our world wants to cancel and silence a God who will not bow to our demands for decency.

God God says in the very first chapter of his gospel that Jesus came into the world and he came to his own.

He came to the people of Israel. He came to the people who of all people should have known him and respected him and loved him. But John says even his own received him not.

the world made rejection of God when he made himself fully known in their presence in Jesus Christ.

[19 : 22] And the cross you see and his death at the hands of those he had created that exposes more clearly than anywhere else. The reaction of the human heart to God.

The verdict is absolutely clear isn't it? for everybody to see. Even his own received him not. And yet John goes on to say there that to all who did receive him he gave the right to become children of God.

And that you see is because the cross is also a judgment on the world in another sense. As well as a verdict pronounced it was a judgment in the sense of condemnation.

It was a sentence passed as a real punishment for human sin. When the world's real hatred and rebellion against God is at last exposed so completely in the rejection of the Son of God in the flesh, and when the verdict is now utterly incontrovertible, well then that verdict demands condemnation.

It demands punishment. God's justice must be seen to be just. No longer can that kind of rebellion just be passed over as God in his immense forbearance as the apostle Paul had passed over former sins.

[20 : 48] Now he says in Romans chapter 3, now he must show his righteousness, he must show his justice in the present time. judgment has to fall upon such a world to show the earth and to show the heavens that God is just, that God is not unjust, that he's not weak, that he's not twisted and corrupt.

When a high court judge receives the verdict from the jury against a vile murderer or rapist or whatever, when the evidence shows that the crimes are incontrovertible, if he does not then pass down a judgment and a punishment, there will be howls, howls of horror and injustice, rightly so.

And so in just that way you see Jesus says here now there must be judgment on this world. That's the cry of all heaven, that justice must be maintained.

And now Jesus says here in verse 31, now there is judgment on this world. But the judgment that he is speaking of would fall not upon the world because Jesus himself takes the place of those rebellious sinners.

John says in the beginning of the gospel, John the Baptist, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Because you see for Jesus, his death was judgment as condemnation, as punishment for sin.

[22 : 36] The sin of the world, the sin of those who rejected him, who scorned him, the sin of those who led him to die on the cross. And that's why you see in verse 27 here, the horror of that overwhelmed him.

His soul was deeply troubled. He was filled with anxiety, with horror, with deep revulsion, because he knew and he alone fully knew the true horror of that death.

Not just as physical death, but death as the wages of human sin. That was the terrible prospect that convulsed Jesus as he contemplated the cross.

The judgment, the condemnation on the world became the judgment and condemnation on Jesus. God's holy wrath, his just judgment on sin, was going to fall wholly on his shoulders.

some people find that very difficult to stomach. They find it very difficult to stomach the idea of God judging anyone at all for any sin.

[23 : 45] Far less judging his son for others' sin. But actually there's nothing very modern in that view, because just a few verses on here, look down to verse 38.

John is quoting from the prophet Isaiah. And hundreds of years before Jesus, he had spoken of the suffering servant of God, whom God would send to bear others' sins.

And Isaiah himself says, well, who has believed what they heard from us about this? They couldn't believe it then in Isaiah's day. They couldn't believe it in Jesus' day. But Isaiah spoke so, so clearly.

He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that has brought us peace was upon him. Jesus' death brought judgment.

It accomplished the punishment on sin in this world. And through his death, the rebellion of this world is judged forever for all of those for whom Christ bore that judgment in himself on the cross.

[24 : 51] Our sins were cast out at the cross of Jesus forever and ever. And ever. so that, verse 36, we might be saved out of sin's darkness and into the light of life.

While you have the life, believe in the light that you may become sons of light, not of darkness. Our sins were cast out forever at the cross of Jesus.

But that's not all because Jesus' death brings glorious restoration in another way because at the cross Satan is cast down forever.

Look again at verse 31. The ruler of this world, Jesus is saying, is defeated forever. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. Not only does the cross do away with the guilt of sin in those who are saved by Christ, who bears their judgment, but it destroys also the power of sin and the author of sin, the devil himself.

Jesus on the cross disarmed rulers and authorities of that dark world. He put them to shame, triumphing over them in his cross as the apostle Paul to the church in Colossae.

[26 : 10] That means he shattered the devil's hold over his redeemed people. Or to put it another way, Jesus banished not only the sins that we are addicted to, but the very addiction itself.

The thing that gives power to the pusher to control and to destroy a life. And so that evil pusher, if you like, is disarmed and can have no power any longer over his victims.

That's why Paul says in Romans chapter 6, sin shall no longer be your master. That's why he can say there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because Satan, the great condemner, is overcome and his power to condemn God's people is gone.

That's what C.S. Lewis is conveying so wonderfully in his Narnia stories. When at Aslan's death on the stone table and his rising to life, the power of the white witch, remember, is destroyed forever.

And the endless winter in Narnia is banished. The spring comes. New life at last because her power is banished. And Jesus' death restores his people from the bondage of sin, you see, by freeing us not only from the guilt of sin but also from the power of sin over our lives.

[27 : 34] The cross sets us truly free at last. You see, Paul writes to the Colossian church and he unequivocally links the forgiveness of our trespasses at the cross, cancelling the record of debt that stands against us, he says.

And he links that with his great liberation from bondage to the evil one. He says, our debt of sin, Jesus set aside, nailing it to the cross.

He disarmed rulers and authorities and put them to shame, triumphing over them. That's what his cross brought, you see, a great deliverance from Satan himself. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

Turn with you just to the last book of the Bible, if you will, for a moment, to Revelation chapter 12, because in John's later vision, he sees this very moment being depicted so graphically.

In Revelation 12, verses 1 to 6, he speaks about the birth of a man-child, that's the Christ, whom the dragon, the devil seeks to devour, but he's caught up to the throne of God instead.

[28 : 49] And it's an apocalyptic vision of Christ's death and his resurrection. And the result of that is seen in verses 7 to 10. Look, now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who was called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Satan is cast down forever through the cross of Jesus Christ. That's why we sing, when Satan tempts us to despair and tells us of the guilt within, we look to heaven and see him there who made an end of all our sin.

And we rejoice, you see, because the ruler of this world is defeated forever. Because sin is cast out forever, Satan is cast down forever.

[30 : 07] In the great deliverance that we have in the cross of Calvary, William Still, the late William Still used to say that the cross delivers us from the fruit of sin and from the root of sin and from the brute of sin, Satan himself.

We're delivered from sin's penalty, from the guilt of our sins. We're delivered from sin's power that enslaves us and that makes us unable not to sin. And we're delivered from its dark personality.

from the devil himself, the author of sin, the enemy of our souls, the deceiver, the murderer from the beginning. From all these three dimensions, from sins, from sin, and from Satan himself, we have deliverance in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ. Look back to John chapter 12, and you'll see thirdly here in verse 32, Jesus' death brings this deliverance only because, well, because the Savior is lifted up at the cross.

The cross is where the Redeemer of this world is exalted forever. He who is the great Savior of men is enthroned as the great ruler and the judge of all mankind.

[31 : 24] Verse 32, I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. And again, there's deliberate ambiguity here. The lifting up clearly refers to Jesus' crucifixion.

He'll be lifted up on the cross. But it also refers to Jesus lifting up in glory and in exaltation. In Isaiah's great prophecy that John quotes from here in this chapter so much, Isaiah repeatedly saw God, the Lord, high and lifted up.

But he also foresaw the humble servant of the Lord as being high and lifted up and thus being exalted through his suffering for his people.

So you see, Jesus' exaltation isn't a reward for his death on the cross. Jesus' exaltation is inherent in his death on the cross. It's by this kind of death that he's going to die, that he is exalted in a new and superlative way.

Because you see, in the cross, God the Almighty is revealed to be so much more than we ever knew him to be before. In the cross, you see, we see the fullness of his grace and his truth.

[32 : 44] It's in the cross that that is revealed completely and uniquely forever. That our God, in order to be the exalted redeemer, is the God who sheds his own blood for his people, is the God who gives all he has for us.

to the cross of Jesus lifts the Son of God high above all other pretenders as the unique and glorious God of heaven and earth. There is no other God who will define himself in such a self-demeaning glory.

That's foolishness to the world's eyes. But you see, this God, our God, his greatest glory, is to be the Savior of his people.

The one who through his death will draw all people to himself. And again, there's two senses there. He is the Savior who draws all to himself without distinction.

That is, his saving mercy is for every race, for every color, for every creed, for every background of person. John's gospel shows us that so wonderfully all the way through right from the beginning.

[34 : 05] Do you remember in chapter 3 there's the Jewish high priest Nicodemus who comes to him. Then the very next chapter there's a foreign Samaritan woman whom the Jews regarded as half-breeds and she was a loose woman, a despised person.

And here in chapter 12 we've seen the whole world coming to him. Verse 20, the Greeks, the Gentiles, the non-Jews. But because of his self-giving death for sins, you see, even a world that hated him can find his great love, can know the glorious restoration that he alone can bring.

He draws all without distinction to believe in him, to find the life that could never be had. God. But just as importantly, there's a very real sense in which Jesus' exaltation draws all people to himself, all without exception.

In the prologue, in John chapter 1, remember, John says that in Jesus, the true light that sheds light on everyone was coming into the world. And through Jesus' death and his resurrection and his exaltation, he has been lifted up, high and exalted, above every power and authority on earth and heaven, and he will judge all people.

He alone will shed an all-seeing and an all-searching light on every human heart and every human life. And he will expose every single human heart with that searching light of perfect judgment.

[35 : 41] The day is coming, as Jesus said back in John chapter 5, when all the dead will rise and hear his voice. And that voice, will command eternity for every single human being who has ever lived.

Some, to the resurrection of life eternal. They will become sons of light, as verse 36 calls them here. But for others, it will be to an eternal condemnation, forever in darkness.

And he and he alone will draw all people to himself to face that great judgment without which the world can't be restored to its true glory.

Where all rebellion is at last done away with forever. Where none who refuse his saving mercy and his sovereign power and rule, none like that can ever remain in his kingdom, else it cannot be restored to perfection.

And that's what it means, you see, that the redeemer of this world, Jesus Christ, is exalted forever. He is lifted up as the ruler and as the eternal judge.

[36 : 56] It means, as C.S. Lewis put it, that in the end, that face, which is either the delight or the terror of the universe, must be turned on each of us, either with one expression or the other.

either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised.

I will draw all people to myself. So make no mistake, Jesus' death achieved a mighty purpose, a great deliverance that restores the true kingdom of God for eternity.

sin. The rebellion of this world is judged forever. Our sins are cast out at the cross of Christ. The ruler of this world is defeated forever.

Satan is cast down forever through the cross of Christ. And the redeemer of this world is exalted forever. Jesus is lifted up high in the cross.

[38 : 08] Through the cross, darkness is defeated. Eden is restored. God's word. That's why we call this coming Friday Good Friday. When earth's darkest hour became the hour of great deliverance, its brightest light.

grace. That's why the Easter gospel is called Good News. Because it proclaims this glorious restoration. The true glory of God restored for this world and in this world forever and ever.

But you see, to stand before him with joy, to stand before him and share in that glory of our exalted Savior on the day that he comes, to judge this world high and lifted up, to usher in his eternal reign.

to stand before him with joy on that day, you must bow before him today, before that day. You must rejoice in a Savior who calls you to that kind of glory, who calls you to an earthly glory that means following him in his walk of shame, in his road to the cross.

Because you see, it's in the darkness of the cross of shame alone. that you can find in this world the light of his marvelous crown of salvation.

[39 : 31] And so Jesus is calling people still through his spirit, speaking his word in the world today. Look at verse 35. It's the same message. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you.

Verse 36, while you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light. That's still the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ today.

Why would you do otherwise when this is the kind of death that Jesus, our Savior, was willing to die to restore us to the glory of that eternal kingdom?

while you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light. Amen.

Let's pray. Merciful God, who made all people and hates nothing that thou hast made, nor wills the death of a sinner, but rather that they should be converted and live.

[40 : 40] have mercy on all who are still in darkness and take from them all ignorance and hardness of heart and contempt of thy word.

And so fetch them home, Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of true Israelites and be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee in the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Amen.