

That Day

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[0 : 00] Thanks very much, Al. Good evening, everyone. As Al and others have said, it is a real privilege to be back with a smallish but real congregation in the church this evening. I had the privilege at the end of the first lockdown of speaking on the Sunday evening we came back, and I'm delighted to be doing it again, although I hope there won't be a third time that I'll be saying that.

But great Deas, I think for all of us, it makes us look forward to a better day. Yes, it's good for some of us to be able to meet together tonight, and for others to be able to join us on Zoom.

But one day, we'll all be together as a church in the building. One day, we won't be wearing face coverings and socially distancing.

One day, we'll be able to sing heartily rather than just listen to songs. And on that day, we'll be able to greet one another with a hug or a handshake, whichever we prefer.

We'll be able to be reunited with people who we haven't seen for many months, family and friends. And we'll be able to praise God as we look back at how he has taken us through the time of crisis, and as we look forward to the future.

[1 : 20] Life will be back to normal. But maybe on that day, we will then look forward to another day. A day when the Lord Jesus will return.

A day when we'll go to be with him, and the troubles and trials of this life will be behind us. A day when there will be justice done on the earth.

And in that day, we'll rejoice in our Savior and our salvation. In that day, we'll gaze on the face of our Savior, and be able fully to express our appreciation of him.

In that day, things will really be back to how they should be. And I wonder if we look forward to that day, with as much excitement as we look forward to the day when life will return to what is called normal in our society.

Are we really thrilled at the thought of the Lord Jesus returning, and going to be with him? So there's a day coming when things will be better, when we won't be so affected by the virus, and we'll be living life as we used to live it.

[2 : 38] But how much better that there's a day coming when everything will be returned to the way it should be, and when Jesus is seen to reign.

And who knows? Maybe the day of Jesus' return will be sooner than the day when we're free from the virus. It could be any time. Why am I saying that?

Because when we come to Isaiah chapters 11 and 12, we have exactly the same situation. You may have noticed in the reading that several times it said, in that day.

And it said it at key points in the passage. If you have your Bible in front of you, and you have a Bible that indents poetry, you may notice that verses 10 and 11 of chapter 11 are actually prose.

And actually, Archie told us a couple of weeks ago that when we see prose in the middle of poetry, as there was in his passage too, that is something that we should be paying particular attention to.

[3 : 45] So Isaiah is pointing out that that day is really important. And then in chapter 12, in verses 1 and 4, he talks about in that day and what people will say.

Again, he's saying, here's something we look forward to, and it's going to be really important, and here's what's going to happen. And as with our illustration from current situation, there are the two perspectives of what that day means.

There is a day in the time of Isaiah, actually probably a couple of hundred years later, but there is a day in the relatively short term when much of the prophecy in these chapters was fulfilled, particularly when the Israelites returned from their exile.

But even then, even looking back on that, as they read Isaiah 11 and 12, they must have thought, is that it? Is there not more to it than this?

It doesn't all seem to have been fulfilled. And of course, when we look at it, we see particularly the day when the Lord Jesus will return, and the day when everything will be under his rule, and everything will be perfect.

[5 : 06] So the perspective here, the ultimate perspective here, is exactly the same as the ultimate perspective I was talking about a few minutes ago. And the bulk of what we want to learn from this passage is looking forward to the Lord's return and what will happen then.

But there is an immediate context, and let me just take a short time to talk about that. So you remember, in this section of Isaiah, what's happening is you've got the nation of Israel, the northern kingdom, the nation of Judah, the southern kingdom, now separate since the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

And round about, you've got quite a number of other small nation states. So you've got Aram, and you've got Philistine, and you've got Moab, and a number of others. And they're all relatively insignificant countries in terms of the world of their day.

They get involved in skirmishes with each other, but they weren't nations at that time of great significance. Below them to the south, you have Egypt, but more significantly, to the northeast of these nations, you have the great nation of Assyria.

And Assyria was a really scary superpower in its day. It was one of the most vicious powers in human history. It was treacherous, it was cruel, and it overran countries with no thought at all for their good.

[6 : 38] And Assyria had become a big threat to all these small nations sitting in the Middle East. And they had a choice to make. So Israel and Aram, seeing Assyria on their borders, they joined together, they joined forces, and they tried to raise Israel, tried to raise Judah rather, to join them.

It seems that Judah said no, and so there was a bit of a skirmish between Israel and Aram and Judah. And in that situation, as the king of Judah, as Ahaz wondered what to do, Isaiah said to him, trust God.

Don't enter into a pact with Assyria. Trust God for the future. And Ahaz didn't listen to him, and there are consequences in that for Judah, which are listed.

And at the same time, because of Israel's sin, the northern country of Israel's sin, there was a judgment from God on it. So chapters 7 to 11 are about that, and we just put a little picture up.

And this is kind of summary of where we've been over the last few weeks. So it's bookended by chapter 6, which is the call of Isaiah when the Lord appeared to him, and chapter 12, which is a celebration we'll look at later on.

[7 : 53] And then there's a section which is particularly about the kingdom of Judah, and there's one that's particularly about the kingdom of Israel. And we can say both of them have broadly the same pattern.

There's a challenge, a decision to be made. Following on from that decision, there's a judgment from God, a judgment against Judah, a judgment against Israel, a judgment also against Assyria, described as God's tool.

There's a remnant. There is a small number of people who don't turn away from God and provide hope for the future. And then there is the forward-looking ending of it.

So chapter 9 is the chapter we're all so familiar with that points to the birth of the Lord Jesus, unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.

And chapter 11 was drawn at the bulk of the passage that we're looking at this evening. It looks forward, as I said, that bit further, and it looks forward especially to the return of the Lord Jesus.

[8 : 56] But the immediate context, what people would look at and perhaps in the centuries to come would take from it as having happened, was that after the exile, after Israel was taken over by the Assyrians and Judah by the Babylonians and the people were taken away, there would be a return which came under Ezra and Nehemiah, and there would be a partial fulfillment of what is said here.

People were able to live in peace in the land and to, again, worship God as they wished to, but only a partial fulfillment.

So let's spend the rest of the time thinking about what this has to say to us as we look forward from now. What is it that is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy here?

And four things about that that I think we learn from these chapters. In that day, first of all, there will be a rain.

So this is chapter 11 and the first five verses. It is about a king who is filled with God's spirit and who rules justly.

[10 : 10] And of course, it's about the Lord Jesus. So let's have a look at that and draw some thoughts from it. Chapter 11 and verse 1 says, a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse.

Now, if you remember way back to chapter 6, in chapter 6, because of the sins of the people, God had prophesied, Isaiah prophesied from God that the tree would be cut down.

The tree that was Israel or Judah would be cut down and there would only be a stump left. Isaiah says, looking forward, that stump will produce a shoot.

Just a shoot, but a shoot that will grow to be a branch and to bear fruit. And that fruit will come from the stump of Jesse. Now, Jesse, of course, was the father of King David in the Old Testament.

Interestingly, he says from Jesse rather than David, perhaps something to do with the obscurity from which the Lord Jesus would come, perhaps also pointing to him being the second David, the great David's greater son.

[11 : 18] But Isaiah is saying there will be in the future a shoot that becomes a branch that bears fruit. And this person, this shoot, which will ultimately be the king, it will have some very special qualities.

So verse 2, the spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of power, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of God, and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He could perfectly be describing the Lord Jesus, couldn't he? Of course, with the eye of prophecy, he is. the one on whom the spirit of God came to rest at his baptism, but throughout his life who was filled with the spirit and who displayed the qualities that are those of someone who is truly spiritual.

So Isaiah talks about a spirit of wisdom and understanding. So that is being able to see the world around about us and to see it for what it is and to know what to do in every situation.

And is that not exactly what we see in the Lord Jesus? Whoever came to him, he could discern what was in their hearts, he could discern their needs, and he could act in a way that was for their good.

[12 : 50] For some people, it was to heal them physically. For some people, it was to assure them of salvation and of forgiveness. For some people, it was to condemn them because of their hypocrisy.

But in every situation, the Lord Jesus, through the spirit, was able to discern what was the right thing to do and to do it. Spirit of counsel and of power, which is the next thing described here, would typically be the kind of expression that was used in terms of a king and managing the affairs of state.

So it is understanding again, but understanding the big picture, being able to see everything in its context and what needs to be done and having the power to do it.

And again, is that not exactly what we see in the Lord Jesus, both in his life on earth and now as he is our advocate in heaven with the Father.

He understands our situation. He understands our world. He is able to guide us as we seek to navigate through it. And he has had in his life and has now the power to make a real difference in every situation.

[14 : 14] And of course, ultimately, as he went to the cross, he had the understanding and the wisdom to know that that was the only way of salvation for us.

And he had the power, he had the desire and the ability to go to the cross and because he was sinless to take our sins on himself and to emerge victorious, to rise again on the third day.

The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and power, and then thirdly, as the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

So the Lord Jesus had a perfect knowledge in every situation. Not head knowledge really particularly being talked about here although that comes into it. It is the knowledge that comes from being able to see things the way they are and being able to act on them.

And particularly knowing God and fearing him. Fear, of course, not being terror in this context. It is respect and reverence for God.

[15 : 24] And that is the description of the Lord Jesus. I wonder how well it describes us. We all have the spirit of the Lord.

Unlike people in the Old Testament where the spirit would come and rest on someone for a while to do a specific task and would then not be with them. We have the spirit, the Holy Spirit in our hearts, in our lives, guiding, leading, directing us, helping us to live the way that Jesus does.

Jesus did and Jesus would want us to. And do we then display wisdom and understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, and fear of the Lord?

And then verses 3 to 5 talks about what this shoot will do, what this king who is coming will do.

And it is a message of judgment but of righteousness and of justice. Verse 5, I think, is key. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash round his waist.

[16 : 35] The things, if you like, that hold him together, that make him complete are righteousness and faithfulness. Doing what is right, helping others to do what is right, enforcing justice where necessary, but always being faithful to God and to his word.

This is the king that Isaiah is able to look forward to. This is the one who ultimately will reign. and this is the one who is our saviour and our lord and we should be serving him and seeking to follow his example.

Him says, Sing we the king who is coming to reign. Glory to Jesus, the lamb that was slain. Righteousness, peace, then his empire shall bring.

Joy to the nations when Jesus is king. So we look forward to the day when Jesus is seen to reign and restore righteousness and justice in our world.

Let's move on though and look at the next few verses from verse 6 to verse 9. And I've called these restoration. It is the return of creation to what it should be.

[18 : 00] Now like a lot of prophecy, we have a bit of a dilemma with these verses. Are we to take them literally or not? So will it really be the case that lions will start to eat straw rather than meat?

Now it's possible, but it would require quite big biological changes. Obviously God could well do, but it may be that what the writer here is looking at, the prophecy here, is as much figurative as literal.

That is, looking forward to a day when those who are strong, when those who like to exert their authority, have that taken away from them and they are brought down to the same kind of level as those who are weak and those who might seem helpless.

So in terms of the world of Isaiah's day, it would be Israel and Judah having the same kind of strength and the same kind of relationship that Assyria did or Babylon would or that Egypt did.

The big countries and the little countries being able to live at peace together. Now maybe that, or it's maybe to be taken literally if you two think that through for yourself.

[19 : 19] But the key thing is it is a world where creation has been restored to the way it should be. Where everything is peaceful and there is not a dogfight going on and everyone trying to get their own way.

Where a little child can lead them. I think the contrast is between a great warrior king going out to battle and a little child being able to lead. Where there is no fear.

Where the young child can put his hand into the nest of vipers and not worry about it. And how can this come about? What are the circumstances that are required for that?

Well it's in verse 9 isn't it? They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

How do the waters cover the sea? They cover it completely. You don't have bits of sea and then there's a bit of dry land and then there's another bit of sea and that is not what we would normally expect.

[20 : 25] The sea is full of water everywhere. And the prophet is saying here one day the earth will be full of the knowledge of God in that way.

Not head knowledge not just knowing the facts about God but knowing God and seeking to do his will and to follow in his good purposes.

One day everything will change and a world where there is very little knowledge of God now. A world where most people have no interest in God or in eternity.

One day it will all be different and everyone will know that Jesus is Lord. Everyone will know that we have a just and a righteous God and creation will be back as it should have been if sin hadn't entered in it.

Creation will be restored. Let me continue my hymn. Knowledge and fear of the Lord then shall be as the deep waters that cover the sea all things shall be in the splendor of spring and all harmonious when Jesus is King.

[21 : 39] restoration. Third thing we look at I've put under the heading of return. God's people are reunited.

Interesting as we come to verse 10 in verse 1 we notice that there was a shoot coming from the stump of Jesse. In verse 10 it talks about the root of Jesse.

Now the root it needs to be there for a long time before the shoot can come up or before the tree can be established doesn't it? So we have this curious paradox which we can begin to understand now that the Lord Jesus who was great David's greater son also was the one who was there before David or before Abraham or before anything else existed.

He is the one who is the root the source of everything in our lives. and he will be the banner says Isaiah that will attract people to him and that will bring them all together.

If you're following on in verse 11 there's a list of different places and nationalities there. The idea I think is just from every corner of the world. Some are east some are west some are north some are south God's people are being brought back from everywhere.

[23 : 00] these verses I think there are quite a lot of echoes of the exodus from Egypt and of God's people for the first time being brought to Israel and saying this will happen again a second time.

That God's people who have been removed from their land will be brought back. Now as I say it's probably in the shortish term referring to the return from exile from Babylon.

You might also want to depending on how you view things seeing it the return of the Jews to Israel in the middle of the 20th century something which people would never have forecast in previous years but wonderfully happened.

But particularly I think it looks forward to the day when all God's people will be together united under the Lord Jesus. That those who were there in the first century BC when the Lord was on earth, those who have trusted him since, and the saints from Old Testament days who had their trust in God will all be united and will be together singing the praise of the Lord Jesus.

All separation is gone. You may have noticed the end of chapter 11 that the prophet talks about the seas drying up, the Euphrates and the Red Sea and so on, and the picture there of just everything that separates being removed.

[24 : 26] See in the Bible tends to talk about separation. So everything that would stop us being together as God's people is removed and we're all united and we're all together with the Lord who loved us and who died for us.

And what a day that should be as we look forward to it when we're with the Lord and we're with all the saints from down the ages. All shall be well in this kingdom of priests.

Freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase. Foe shall be friend when his triumph we sing. Sword shall be sickle when Jesus is king.

And these skirmishes talked about between Israel and Judah and the other nation dragged about. They'll be behind because everyone who knows the Lord will be brought together.

And finally let's have a look at chapter 12. So chapter 12 as I've said is one of the bookends of the section of Isaiah I've been looking at from chapter 6 to chapter 12.

[25 : 31] And it's a song of praise to God. Actually it's two songs of praise to God. But you've noticed that verse 1 says in that day you will say and verse 4 also says in that day you will say.

What you don't get in the modern translations but would get in the very old ones is that in verse 1 the you is singular so it would be thou in some of the old translations in verse 4 it's plural so it's ye in the old translations.

So the first few verses are an individual song of praise to God and the last few verses are the company of God's people joining together in praise of him.

But all together recognizing God's goodness, recognizing God's wisdom, recognizing the reign of the Lord Jesus and praising God for all he has done for us.

So in verses 1 to 3 it is the individual praising God. Now again there's something you probably don't get from your translation.

[26 : 41] In two places it talks about God being my salvation. It's the beginning of verse 2 and it's also at the end of verse 2. Now what you don't get from that is that the name Isaiah, the name of the prophet here, means God is my salvation.

So there's a bit of a pun if you like going on here. This is Isaiah as the prophet saying, yes my name is true, God is my salvation. And three things that particularly strike him as he thinks about God his salvation.

The first in verse 1 is God's forgiveness. So God has rightly been angry with his people. His people have failed him, they deserve to be judged.

But our God is a merciful and gracious God. And when the people turn back to him then he will forgive them and they will be restored to fellowship with him.

And that is something too that we should be praising God for. We deserve God's wrath. We have done wrong, we are sinners, we don't deserve anything from God.

[27 : 53] But through the death of the Lord Jesus and through God's grace to us we have come to know him. And we know he is no longer angry with us. Because the Lord Jesus has taken the punishment, he has turned away the wrath of God.

He has atoned for our sins and we have forgiveness through him. And Isaiah praises God for that. In verse 2 he praises God that he doesn't need to be afraid.

Actually a couple of weeks ago he was talking about the trust, who do you trust? And I think that is coming out again in this. Surely God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.

Isn't it great that for us as Christians, when we go through the trials of life, when things are difficult and stressful for us, we know that we can trust the Saviour who loved us and gave his life for us.

We know he is in every situation, that he is in control, and we can commit things to him knowing that he knows what is best for us. And then in verse 3 there is the joy that comes from salvation.

[29 : 09] Our sins have been forgiven. We have a God, a Saviour, who we can trust in. And so we can live our lives with joy, with the well of salvation springing up within us and rejoicing in all that the Saviour has done for us.

I wonder whether we as individuals, as we do as a church, thank God regularly for all these things that he has done for us, for our salvation, for his daily provision, for the joy that we can have in the Lord Jesus.

But then there's also in verses 4 to 6 there's the united worship together. This is addressed to all God's people and encouraging them to praise God and to tell others about him.

And the two go together. We praise God because we want to sing his praises and celebrate all that he has done in our lives.

But we also praise God and proclaim him so that others may come to know him and to trust him as well. And Isaiah says the two very much go together.

[30 : 29] As people can see the delight that we have in our God, the relationship that we have with him, then they will be attracted to him and will be able to proclaim his goodness and the salvation that we have through the Lord Jesus.

And that's true both individually and corporately. We should be rejoicing in our God and that should be in a sense infectious, that people around about us should see we're different and should want to come to trust in the Lord Jesus.

So again I ask myself and all of us, are we rejoicing in the prospect of the Lord's return? Do we look forward to that day and yearn for it when things will be as they should be?

And when we will be with our Lord and be with him forever? And if we are, does it make a difference in the way we live?

Does it make a difference in the way we view our world? Does it make a difference in how we relate to others and seek to witness to them about the Lord Jesus? When the Bible talks about the second coming of the Lord Jesus it is never a theoretical thing that it is talking about.

[31 : 46] It is always something that should have a practical impact on our lives and make us want day by day to live for the Lord and to tell others about him.

Kingdom of Christ, for thy coming we pray. Hasten, O Father, the dawn of that day, when this new song thy creation shall sing, Satan is vanquished and Jesus is king.

Come let us sing praise to our king, Jesus our king, Jesus our king. This is our song who to Jesus belong. Glory to Jesus, to Jesus our king.

Let's pray together. our Father, we thank you for this wonderful prophecy by Isaiah. We thank you for the way in which you enabled him so accurately to portray what will happen on the Lord's return.

That one day the Lord will come back and in that day everything will be put right that's been so wrong. In that day we will be united with all others who love him and know him.

[32 : 58] Above all in that day we will go to be with our Lord and to be with him forever. Help us to look forward to that day, to long for it and to seek to win others for the Lord Jesus that they too may have the joy of knowing that they will go to be with him.

We thank you for your presence with us this evening. We pray you will continue with us now as we come to remember the Lord Jesus together. We ask in his name. Amen. Amen.