

A Day is Coming

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[0 : 00] Well, most of our days come and go, don't they? Most of life is pretty ordinary, but we also have big days in our lives.

The day you start school, the day you pass your driving test, your first day of work, your last day of work, at wedding days, birthdays, the day that you hear the news you never wanted to hear, the day that you lose someone that you love.

Our days are punctuated by days that we remember for the rest of our lives. Not only days, history, years are the same.

Most years, nothing happens. And then some years, things really change. At 1066, the Norman Conquest. 1517, the beginning of the Reformation in Europe.

1707, the Act of Union. 1843, the birth of the Free Church of Scotland. 911. 77, the year the Queen died.

[1 : 15] Not every year goes down in history, but some really do. Of course, those dates only mean anything, don't they? Because we begin counting from the year 1 AD.

Anno Domini. The year of our Lord. Our whole conception of time, the passage of the years, stems, doesn't it, from one great life-changing work.

The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, friends, that's not only true in the history of nations, is it? That there are big days. But the history of our whole world.

God has had a plan from before the beginning of time for every second that has passed in our universe. But in His vast eternal plan of redemption, He has ordained that some days are big days. And the way that the prophets spoke about those days in God's plan is by speaking about one massive day, the day of the Lord. And that day, it crops up, I counted, seven times in our passage tonight.

[2 : 24] That's a really good clue, isn't it, as to what Isaiah wants us to focus on. We won't begin to understand what Isaiah is saying in our passage tonight if we don't see that everything he's speaking about happens in a day.

Now, Isaiah says loads of things are going on in that day. So, what we're going to do, first of all, tonight is stand back and take in the breadth of Isaiah's vision of that day.

A bit like taking maybe a panoramic photo of a range of mountains in the distance on the horizon. But then we're going to begin to walk through and walk up through that mountain range and see that there is depth in Isaiah's vision of that day.

Now, that's going to take a little bit of time. But like any good hike, the view will be worth it from the top because then, from those lofty heights, we will begin to see the implications of that day for us. A bit like getting to the top of a mountain and looking back at where we've come from. Well, we want to reach the heights of the day of the Lord and look back at our own lives and see how Isaiah says we need to respond in light of God's salvation and his judgment.

[3 : 44] Let's begin our trek then with the day of the Lord, the foothills, range, and peak. As we think about that day, big day of the Lord, it helps to know, doesn't it, what does a normal day look like for God's people at this point in history?

Well, Isaiah says it looks amazing, but it is absolutely rotten to the core. Verse 6, false religion, superstitions, divination, pagan customs.

That is every day for the people of God. Imagine some of us getting into crystals or sciences or manifesting. Someone said that when people stop believing in God, it's not that they believe in nothing, it's that they'll start believing in anything.

And we see that constantly, don't we? People who would say that we're idiots for following Christ, but who believe that carrying around a piece of rock can change their lives.

We don't live in a rational society, do we? We live in a religious society gone so wrong. And so the world comes up with empty superstitions and wraps them up in shiny packaging.

[4 : 57] And God's people back then said, thank you very much, that's perfect. Thinking that fake human religion would help them. Isaiah also says, though, look, verse 7, money.

They've got silver and gold coming out of their ears. There's no end to their treasures. They're living in a gilded age, a golden age. They want for nothing. And so Isaiah is pushing us further, isn't he? He might not have a Buddha sitting in your lounge, he says. But your lounge might be a sanctuary kitted out to make it a safe space for you.

Our homes can become shrines to our own comfort. Our bank balance can become a security blanket. Or we worry, we get shaken when we hear bad news about the economy.

Because our security is invested in that use. Answers, Isaiah verse 7, they've got loads of tanks.

There's no end to their chariots. Judah's defense budget has gone through the roof.

[6 : 00] They're investing in their nuclear deterrence. In lots of ways. Our world today is much more like Isaiah's world than it was 20 years ago.

They talk today, don't they, about a multipolar world. Not one single consensus about how countries should behave. But competing interests and strategies.

A willingness to test the boundaries of diplomacy. A desire even to wage war. The world today feels much less safe than it used to. And perhaps news about what's happening in the Middle East or Ukraine or Yemen puts fear in us.

But we feel better when we hear about the Iron Dome in Israel. Or new missiles being sent to the front in Ukraine. Because functionally, perhaps we see that military strength as our real defense from what is going wrong in the world.

Those things were temptations for God's people back then. Because they were the things that the rest of the world turned to habitually for salvation.

[7 : 06] And it's not hard for us today to relate to that. Technology and culture have moved on. But these things are still on offer to us today. As if, as if, they could really save us.

Keep us from the real danger. Insulate our lives. Protect our hearts. But Isaiah calls them, verse 8, idols.

Knock off plastic. God replacements. They bow down to the work of their hands. To what their fingers have made, he says. Instead of turning to the sovereign creator God, their covenant Lord. To bring them what they longed for. That security. Identity. Life. Salvation. That's every day for the people of God back then.

But the Lord Almighty has a day in his calendar to bring an end. To those normal everyday days of idolatry. Just look at verse 10 with me. Here's our panoramic view of that day.

[8 : 13] Here's where it all changes. Go into the rocks, he says. High is in the ground from the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty. The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled and human pride brought low.

For the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. The Lord Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty.

For all that is exalted. And they will be humbled. So there is a day, God says, when human pride and the things that we have lifted up to put on his throne will be thrown down and shattered.

And he will be the only one lifted up and sitting on the throne then. It says pretty much the same thing word for word in verse 17. The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled.

The Lord alone will be exalted in that day and the idols will totally disappear. And then chapter 3, which we didn't get to read, it spells out what that day would be like when it came on the ground.

[9 : 23] What is that like for God's people then? Verse 6, look in chapter 3. A man will seize one of his brothers in his father's house and say, you have a cloak. You be our leader.

Take charge of this heap of ruins. But in that day, he will cry out, I have no remedy. I have no food or clothing in my house.

Do not make me the leader of this people. The men of the city will be humbled because they have run out of solutions. Everything that they trusted in will have failed them, forsaken them.

And the women of the city look in 4 verse 1. In that day, seven women will take hold of one man and say, we will eat our own food and provide our own clothes. Only let us be called by your name.

Take away our disgrace. Because in that day, the Lord will snatch away their finery. So what will change in that day?

[10:25] Well, in short, what the men relied on for their manhood, their strength, and what the women relied on for their womanhood, their beauty, would be completely stripped away.

Where God's people sourced their identity as human beings in his world, would be lost to them. And they would be left without an identity, scrabbling to piece their lives back together.

Because they had rested their security and identity in things that were fragile and hollow. And not their faithful covenant God. And so Isaiah is perfectly clear, isn't he?

The day of the Lord is clearly a day of judgment on his people's sin and idolatry. But glance forward to that seventh climactic mention of the day of the Lord in 4 verse 2.

And see that in that same day, says Isaiah, there is salvation. In that day, the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious. And the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.

[11:32] On one and the same day, God would cut his people back down to size. And lift up his glorious and beautiful branch high.

So that he says, the survivors who are left would boast in a glory, not in themselves or in their idols. But this beautiful and glorious branch of the Lord.

And the fruit of his work. So what's going on in this day of the Lord? Our panoramic view. Well, if you were here last Sunday, this will be familiar. It is salvation through judgment.

Salvation through judgment. God humbles the proud but shows grace to the humble. And all in a day's work for the Lord, says Isaiah.

But when is that day? Do we know? Well, we've seen the breadth of the day of the Lord. But here there is depth to it too.

[12:36] And there is height to it. Like climbing through a mountain range in the distance. You know, when we look at it on the horizon, it's sort of flattened out. But as we climb up through it, we see, don't we, that it ascends.

There are layers to it. There are foothills. There is a range. There is a peak. So first, the foothills. In only a hundred years or so, Isaiah's words would come true in a relatively small way.

There was a day of the Lord in 597 BC. And the Babylonians came. They put Jerusalem under siege. That is, they surrounded it and cut it off from the outside world.

And so most of chapter 3 is describing the grim reality of that. Isaiah says, really, the Lord would take away physically the food and water, the hero and warrior, the wise, the strong, everyone and everything that they could turn to for survival.

He gives us those couple of scenes, doesn't he, to illustrate the nearest man who still owned clothes, being shoved onto the throne and told to lead this heap of rubble.

[13:46] The women having their necklaces replaced with chains, grabbing the last men who hadn't died on the battlefield and begging to be taken in, if only to have a home. It is society in total freefall.

And yet, as God promised, there would be survivors. Tell the righteous, it will be well with them. For they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds, 3 verse 10. But woe to the wicked, disaster is upon them. And we saw last time that righteous doesn't mean in Isaiah people who haven't done anything wrong.

But those who have turned from their wrongdoing to the Lord for forgiveness, they are called righteous. Because God washes the stains of their sin off of them and makes them white as snow before him.

Gives them this new right relationship with him. And so there is judgment and salvation in the foothills. But the Babylonian invasion was only a false summit.

[14:52] We can see that in chapter 4. The experience of that remnant, the survivors in Jerusalem, didn't live up to Isaiah's vision. A glorious branch didn't come. It's referring to the promised king from David's family to restore God's rule over his people.

In the word it is, the Messiah. The survivors there didn't experience a second exodus. That's the cloud of smoke by day, the glowing fire by night. But all of that did come in time.

In the coming of the branch of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you're thinking, when is he ever called a branch? But Matthew does it.

In chapter 2, verse 23 of his gospel, Matthew says this. He went, Jesus, and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets that he would be a Nazarene. And commentators tear their hair out because none of the prophets say that the Messiah would live in Nazareth. But the name Nazareth comes from the Hebrew word for branch.

[16:03] Netzer. And so it is likely that Matthew is putting two and two together. That the branch of the Lord would come from the branch town. And without wringing the gospels dry, it's clear, isn't it, that he is the one that Isaiah is looking to.

To bring salvation through judgment on that day of the Lord. That he would be beautiful and glorious. That he would wash clean.

Wash the filth off of those who set their hearts on him. That he would do it by a spirit of fire. The Holy Spirit. He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire.

And the gospel writers constantly portray the work of Jesus as a new exodus. We've seen that in our journey through Matthew's gospel. That like Moses, Jesus was hunted by an evil king in his infancy and sent to Egypt for refuge.

That like Moses, he went up the mountain and taught God's people. Proclaimed the covenant to them. Later on in the gospel, of course, he would recreate the Passover meal.

[17:14] But substitute himself for the lamb. His body broken. His blood poured out. And so Isaiah's gospel looks forward to him and says that it is in him.

This promised branch that you will have a shelter and shade from the heat of the day. A refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. But with his salvation comes judgment.

As Mary sang. As she carried him in the womb. The Lord has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones and lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. Could be straight out of Isaiah, couldn't it? For the proud and arrogant. For the proud and arrogant. The branch would be a stumbling stone.

A rock of offense. And they would trip over him and fall. Even as at the same time for the humble in heart. He would become the cornerstone. And the foundation of their faith.

[18:19] And so judgment and salvation in the range proper. But there is of course still the highest peak ahead of us.

And again Isaiah knew that there were fuller fillments coming. Even if he couldn't climb up there himself. Because the judgment and salvation he describes is only ultimately answered in not only his but our future.

A future coming day of the Lord. When Christ will return. Ephraiah, that image in chapter 2 of people crawling into caves and hiding in the ground is a picture of humiliation.

As the kings of the earth are brought down to the dust. But the day is coming. When that vision will come true in a very, very real way. We read from Revelation chapter 6.

John writes, Friends, a day, a day.

[19:42] A great day of judgment is coming. The fabric of the cosmos will come undone. The high mountains and hills. Every human structure raised in defiance against God will come crashing down.

And those who resist him will beg to be buried in the rubble. Because the Lord will come in his faithful presence. The splendor of his majesty. And he alone will be lifted high and glorified in that day.

As he comes to judge the living and the dead. But the humble. But the humble. But the humble. Who have turned to him for rescue. Taking refuge in him from his wrath.

Who glory in him. What of them. What of them. Well, what to the proud is a fearful presence. To them is a glorious presence. And they will live and glory under the refuge.

The canopy of his grace. John goes on in Revelation 7. After this I looked. And there before me was a great multitude. That no one could count. From every nation, tribe, people and language.

[20:52] Standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes. And were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice. Salvation belongs to our God.

Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. So the very God. The very Christ. Who the kings of the earth. Will hide from their wrath. Of the very same God and Christ.

That the righteous remnant of the nations. Will praise. For their rescue. And all in a day's work. For the Lord Almighty.

That day takes us through the foothills. Of the Babylonian invasion. And the range of Christ's first coming. To the high peak of his second coming. And all the way through.

It is judgment and salvation. Salvation through judgment. A God who opposes the proud. But gives grace to the humble. And that day has come.

[21 : 53] And that day is coming. Now we've worked really hard. To climb up to this peak. Not even Isaiah could reach up here.

So let's just catch our breath for the rest of our time. And we'll look then. Down from this vantage point. At our own lives. And think about how we respond.

To this great day. Let's first think about. How do we respond to God's day of judgment. In our everyday. Here are two helpful questions.

I think. To help us live in the light of what Isaiah says. The Lord will judge. Perhaps these questions are ones that we can talk about. After the service as well. But helpful ones I think.

To think through. What does our everyday need to look like. In the light of that great day. Firstly. Whose glory are we living for? Well to put it a bit differently.

[22 : 53] Who do we want in life. To be noticed. And known. Whose name do we want to be famous. And to be celebrated. Because Isaiah is really clear.

That on the day of the Lord. 22 verse 9. People will be brought low. And everyone humbled. He says. Do not forgive them. The word he actually uses.

Is lift up. So it's as if. He is saying. They will be brought down low. And not lifted back up. And verses 12 to 17. Say. You know.

Not just some things. But every lofty tower. Every fortified wall. Every trading ship. Every stately vessel. Everything. Everything that embodies. The arrogance. And pride of humanity.

Over and against God. Every way. In which we seek to make a name. For ourselves. Will come crashing down. For the Lord alone. Will be lifted high. In that day.

[23 : 50] So since that day is coming. Friends. Who do we want today. To be exalted. Famous. Glorified. Great. Celebrated. Who is our everyday.

Building up our own portfolio. And ticking off our own successes. And getting our own faces. And brand. And names recognized. Or is our normal.

Ordinary days. Are they about the Lord's name recognition. In the world. His glory. His fame. Year one. Anno Domini. The beautiful and glorious branch.

Of the Lord. Came into the world. If he is our savior. Year. Isn't he the one. That we want to be celebrated. Isn't it his work.

That we want to be known. And if it is not. Well. That is not going to change. Suddenly on the day. That he returns. Isaiah is really clear.

[24 : 49] If our lives have been spent. Bigging ourselves up. Rather than him. Well one day. We will cry for the rocks. To fall on us. To spare us. From the fearful presence.

Of him. Since that terrible day. Of judgment is coming. What are all the days. Until then. Supposed to be about. Shortly the glory.

And the fame. The lifting up. Of the Lord. The splendor. Of his majesty. That we will fall before. When he comes. Second question.

And related to that. Whose gain. Are we living for? This brings us back. To the idols. That Isaiah listed. In chapter two. All the things. That we turn to you. Thinking that they can give us.

What we want. And need. Instead of God. Let me put it this way. When is it. That we feel safe. In life. Is it when there's enough money.

[25 : 47] Coming in. When people seem to like us. When we feel in control. When the party we like. Is in government.

When our country. And our allies. Are winning the wars. God's people back then. Looked for salvation. Security. And safety. And all of those things. But on the day of the Lord.

Says Isaiah. To you. Verse 20. In that day. People will throw away. To the moles and bats. The idols of silver. And idols of gold. Which they made. To worship. Those idols.

Those handmade things. That they thought. They could use. To control the universe. In the pursuit. Of their own gain. So if that is where. Our cheap knockoff.

God replacements. Are going. To be chucked. Into holes. And into caves. Well what do we need. To do with them. Today. It's a bit harder.

[26 : 42] Than you chucking. Our stuff. Into a hole. Normally. Unless we do really. Have fake. Religious paraphernalia. Because our idols. Our fake gods. Are rooted in our hearts.

And they find expression. In a thousand different ways. As we pursue. Our own gain. And our own. Self-interest. Over and against God. And over and against others. The men and women. In chapter 3. They're great illustrations. Of that aren't they? The men have been. Grinding the faces. Of the poor. To fill their homes. With their plunder. The women have been. Decking themselves out. And every nice thing. They can get their hands on. But at heart. They are both chasing. Aren't they? Their own gain. Trusting in those idols.

Of their own strength. Their own beauty. And they will both. Be judged for it. So says Isaiah. Stop trusting. In mere humans. Who have.

[27 : 38] But breath. In their nostrils. Human religion. Human leaders. Human wealth. Human security. Human strength. Human beauty. Why hold them. In esteem.

What are they really? Whose gain are you living for? What are you trusting in to get it? Those questions help us to respond rightly to God's judgment.

Isaiah finally gives us two ways to respond rightly to God's salvation. In our everyday. day. Firstly. He says. He says. Boast in the glorious branch.

Isaiah looked forward to a day when God would raise up a king and savior for his people. To wash away our filth. Clean the bloodstains of our souls by his spirit. But we friends can look back to his coming.

And glory in his work. Isaiah speaks of a spirit of fire and judgment. On the day of Pentecost.

Remember. The spirit came and rested on the disciples like tongues of fire.

[28 : 46] But for them not to be burned to ashes by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Or he needed to have already fallen on their sin.

And that happened at the cross as Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus the branch took that judgment. Was overwhelmed in that fire for our sins.

So that that spirit of judgment and fire might fall on us and burn us clean. Wash us white as snow. And so Isaiah speaks of him as beautiful and glorious.

Our eyes are drawn, aren't they, to what we think is beautiful. We want to talk about what we think is glorious. He is inviting us then today in our everyday to boast in the branch of the Lord.

To glory in Christ our Savior. One day nobody will be able to deny it when he comes in the splendor of his majesty. So would our days until then be spent boasting in him.

[29 : 52] In his work in our lives. Would he be splendorous. Majestic. Glorious to us. Beautiful. And finally Isaiah points us to the eternal gain that we have in him.

Because look, the very things that they then and we now look for from our idols. God has provided really and truly in his son. A shelter and shade.

A refuge and hiding place from the heat and the storm and the rain. All the safety and security that we need for life. Is in Christ. And so we trust him and find our identity in him.

Instead of in our income, our popularity, our news feed. And not only in the few years of this life. But for eternity. Remember in Exodus, the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire.

Traveled with God's people on the road. But on that day, says Isaiah. The cloud and fire would come to rest. Like a tent. Like a canopy over his people's.

[31 : 02] New and permanent home. A resting place for God and his people to dwell forever.

Friends, nothing in this life can provide that eternal gain that we are chasing.

But Jesus can. And does for those who trust him. So says Isaiah. Glory in him and find your gain in him. And you will be saved today.

And spared that terrible judgment of that coming day of the Lord. On his return. Let's come to him and pray to him now.