

November 1, 2020 - Bill Howell

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Preacher: Bill Howell

[0 : 0 0] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Well, it's good to be with you this morning.

It's just, it's exciting to be with any Christian in person these days, isn't it? We appreciate that more this year than we ever have before. And we were driving down Manchester the other day, and I saw one of my stores that I'd forgotten all about.

It said Uncle Bill's. And I was going to have to stop in and see how things are going. I hope it's not a bar. I just can't remember it.

But thanks to those of you who are praying. Oh, okay. Okay. Thanks to you who are praying for the summer camps and included Storybook Lodge.

We thank the Lord for the opportunities he gave us for seven weeks of overnight camps and a couple of day camps as well. And the protection he gave us. And it was one of the healthiest summers we've had.

[1 : 1 1] Maybe with some of the precautions. Maybe that was a part of it. But overall, we look to the Lord. We thank the Lord. We were able to operate at 50% capacity. So maybe fewer in numbers help.

But thank the Lord for the opportunities and the joy of sharing through the camps for his honor and glory. Well, I'd like you to turn with me now to the greatest chapter in the Old Testament.

I shared some on this chapter at the summer camps at our campfire. And I've continued to study this chapter a bit. I've heard several reports of this chapter being read by Orthodox Jews.

And they're saying, listen, you're reading to me from the New Testament. Not the Old Testament. And that's because Isaiah 53 so clearly describes the life and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah prophesied 600 to 700 years before the arrival of Messiah. And during that time, Micah also prophesied.

[2 : 1 3] And you're familiar with Micah's famous prophecy in chapter 5, verse 2. But you, Bethlehem of Ephrath, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting.

You know, fulfilled prophecy is what clearly distinguishes the Bible as the supernatural word of God, distinct from all other books. How does the unbeliever respond to fulfilled prophecy?

Well, there's really only one thing the unbeliever can do, and that's to say, well, it was written after the fact. It's just a pack of lies. I can't think of anything else the unbeliever would be able to use to justify fulfilled Bible prophecy.

Several years ago, for those of you who are readers, you might be familiar with Da Vinci Code that came out early in the 2000s. And it was a book that was, wow, as number one on the New York Times best-selling list for weeks after weeks after weeks.

And it was an interesting book in a certain sense. The idea behind the story was that Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper had certain clues in it to some things that were hidden.

[3 : 35] And people, of course, were trying to dig out the secret of the Holy Grail, the chalice that contained the wine from the Last Supper and so forth.

And also mentioned in the book was that Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene had several children, and some were still living in France, and that was kind of followed up on. But the church tried to cover this up.

And, of course, at the end of the book, the author, Daniel Brown, says, you know, all this is just a work of fiction, just a work of fiction, no problem there. Yeah, there is a problem because it gets people thinking, hmm, did God really say?

Is there really some kind of cover-up going on by the church and the Bible regarding truth? Just this past year, a book's come out by Daniel Silva.

I'm a reader. I enjoy mysteries, political, religious, intrigue kind of books. And Daniel Silva.

[4 : 39] Let me do something with this. Daniel Silva is a... He was a Catholic.

He married... Oh, boy. He married a Jewish woman who was a correspondent for CNN, journalist for CNN, and they met while they were working in the Middle East.

And so Daniel converted from Catholicism to Judaism. And he's written about 20 books with Gabriel Alon being the protagonist in his series.

And I enjoy those books because Gabriel Alon is a Jewish man, and I like Jewish heroes. My favorite book has lots of Jewish heroes in it.

But the problem is the story begins with the death of the Pope. But there's a question. Did the Pope die or was he murdered?

[5 : 48] And, of course, Gabriel and all these people follow up on right-wing... Some right-wing Catholic conspiracy people that were trying to cover up something.

They were trying to cover up the gospel of Pontius Pilate. Still waiting for the gospel of Barabbas to come out. Just about every other gospel has come out sometime or another.

But the gospel of Pontius Pilate begins, supposedly... This is... I want everybody to know that I alone am responsible for the death of Jesus Christ.

And it goes on then to exonerate the Jewish people for having any part in the death of Jesus Christ. And so, of course, Daniel Silva says at the end, in the afterword, well, it's just a work of fiction.

Just a work of fiction. Yeah, right. Then he goes on to say, you know, the biggest source of anti-Semitism are the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John...

[6 : 59] ...because they blame the Jews for the death of Jesus Christ. Well, again, did God really say? Is there a cover-up?

Are you going to believe Daniel Silva? Are you going to believe Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John regarding the truth? You know, lying... I've not found lying to be a notable characteristic among the Christians I know.

I find that they're lovers of truth. And my Savior is known as the truth. And I don't find any record of him being a deceptive person.

When they arrested him, he said, I spoke all these things in secret. You're trying to, you know, listen, check with everybody else. I'm not trying to cover up anything. He was full of grace and truth, right?

Now, lying is not uncommon among a lot of religious people. In fact, you know, Muhammad, when the end justified the means, he was very deceptive.

[8 : 10] And his followers continue to follow that pattern. Many of his followers. I don't want to make a blanket statement, but, you know, Yasser Arafat, some of these leaders. You can't trust him.

People change. People may not tell the truth. I think of the change that happened in President Trump from being a pro-abortionist to being a pro-life.

Pro-lifer. I mean, that's clear from one end of the spectrum to the other. I think of the changes that have been made in the valuation of some conservative justices who were nominated to the Supreme Court, and they switched over to the liberal side.

You know, people change. But the word of God doesn't change. Aren't you glad you have a solid foundation of truth in the word of God? So, in Isaiah 53, he starts out in verse 1, Who has believed our report or our message?

And it's a report here concerning the suffering servant of Jehovah, that Messiah would experience such amazing hurt. It's hard to believe if he was the chosen one, who was also the son of God, according to the scriptures.

[9 : 27] How could this be? Well, the account actually starts back in chapter 52, verse 13, where we read, Behold, my servant will prosper. He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

And we think of the Lord Jesus, who is now exalted. He's as high as he can be. He's seated at God's right hand in glory. Well, that's the place Lucifer wanted.

If you read Isaiah 14, the Lucifer didn't get it. And Lucifer's going down. He's going way down. But the Lord Jesus, right next to God, the Father, right on his right hand.

And we look forward to the time when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father, according to Philippians 2. When will that time be?

Will it be at the great white throne judgment? Will it be when he comes down from heaven in a white horse? I don't know exactly when it'll be, but we're going to be there, and we're going to be looking forward to that time.

[10 : 34] But on earth, his highest exaltation was being lifted up on the cross, being lifted up in the shame and pain of the cross.

This was higher than he was lifted up at any other time on planet earth. And he may have been seen at that time by more Israelites, more people than at any other point in his public ministry, in his first advent.

And he said in John 12, verse 33, And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me. And he spoke this concerning the death, which he was about to die. And it's at the cross where people, the Jewish people had to make their final decision concerning Jesus Christ.

Why was he there? Was he there because a blasphemer of Jehovah was being put to death? Was he there because some things just got turned upside down and a good man just got put to death in some strange upside down world?

Or was his death on the cross a deliberate plan of a sinner saving God? And that's where I stand. It's not only a report for the Jewish people to believe or reject.

[11 : 50] It's the message that comes down to each of us Gentiles too, doesn't it? In fact, you read ahead in Isaiah 52, you read about the nations, you read about the kings. That's referring to Gentiles and not to Jews.

Do you believe God's report concerning Messiah or not? You know, if you've grown up believing the Bible, as I grew up believing the Bible, there has to come a point when you believe in the Savior for yourself because your parents can't do it, your grandparents can't do it.

And if you don't, you're liable to grow up in this world and get mature and get educated and hear things. And there's always a possibility you may ditch it all. I don't believe that anymore.

But I would urge you to receive this wonderful, amazing, supernatural report on the suffering servant of Jehovah.

In verse 14 of 52, we read, For just as many were astonished at you, my people, so his appearance was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.

[13 : 01] Many were astonished to see the disfigured body of the mutilated man on the middle cross on the day of Christ's crucifixion. No one had ever seen such a bloody crucifixion before, nor would anyone after.

You know, blood was not the signature feature of crucifixion. I mean, if you lose too much blood, you die too quickly. And it was the length, the pain and shame and length of being hung up naked in front of everybody and hanging there for hours.

But in the case of Jesus Christ, he was the bloodiest crucifixion person that ever took place. He hardly looked like a human being. Those who observed him as they walked by would have been stunned.

They would not have recognized him except for the sign that Pilate put above him. This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Jews, expressing the crime for which he was put to death. And my dad used to say that he saw horribly bloody cases in the emergency room at the hospital when someone had gone through the windshield in an automobile accident.

And yet, wow, here, God's servant, marred more than any man. How could this be? How does this make sense? Verse 15.

[14 : 20] Thus he will sprinkle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths on account of him. For what had not been told them, they will see. And what they had not heard, they will understand. And perhaps this reference to the kings refers to the amazement of this gospel message that the greatest person of all would go through the greatest suffering of all, that the King of kings would go through this.

Perhaps it refers to them seeing him when he comes back in all his glory. And they're not going to have a thing to say about it. And they better be on his side or they're going to receive the judgment of God in full.

But this first statement, he'll sprinkle many nations. The word sprinkle is commonly used of the sprinkling of sacrificial blood on the altar of the temple, the brazen altar outside the temple.

You know, on the Day of Atonement, on Yom Kippur, the blood of a bull and the blood of a goat were each taken in by the high priest. Only on this day, once a year, and blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat.

And it was supposed to cover the sins of the Jewish nation. But here's a sacrifice for the nations. He will sprinkle many nations.

[15 : 33] Not just the Jewish people, but all. Peter, when he writes his letter, he writes in his opening verses of his first epistle, to those who are chosen, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood.

It's an expression of the salvation the Lord has provided for each and every one of us who will put our trust in him. Does his crucifixion make sense, or does it, that the greatest of all kings would experience this?

Well, it makes sense if you believe God's report, from God's perspective. It doesn't make sense if you just see this through the reasonings of man. So Isaiah says, to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

You know, the arm, it speaks of strength, doesn't it? And I often see guys at camp, at the dining room, they're lining up.

They're going to test their strength. And arm wrestling against the other. Not so much the girls. Anyhow, it's the guys more than anyone else who will stand in front of their mirror and flex.

[16:58] And frankly, most of them are disappointed in what they see because there's not much there. It's just not very impressive. But the idea is to see strength. And certainly, that's what we see in the Lord Jesus.

We see him as a strong arm of God for salvation. The strength of God's salvation. The Lord Jesus, he did the heavy lifting to accomplish my salvation.

And we don't usually think of strength. We think of death. But the death of Jesus Christ shows you and me and each of us believers the strength of God's love. The strength of his justice.

The strength of his grace towards each one of us. Tremendous demonstration. Isaiah talks more about the arm of the Lord in 52 verse 10, the Lord has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.

And he's talking about bringing the Israelites back from captivity. Strength of the Lord. You know, he showed his strength. And Israel is a testimony to the strength of God.

[18:06] I mean, bringing a nation of slaves who've been in Egypt for 400 plus years, bringing them out, as if they would know anything about anything but being a slave, traveling through the wilderness, 40 years caring for him in the wilderness.

The strength of Jehovah accomplished that. You know, Rahab, when the spies came and it was time to go into the land, she said, oh, we've heard about you and we're terrified.

And we heard about the Lord drying up the Red Sea. She believed it. And there was testimony that that happened. And that was 40 years afterwards.

We think of Israel being scattered throughout the nations. And then, I mean, there was 70-year captivity and Isaiah's talking about coming back from that.

That's quite a time to be out of the land and come back. And then in our own generation, we've seen Israel, well, maybe not some of you, but some of you older ones, you've seen Israel after 1,900, almost 2,000 years out of the land, back in the land?

[19:14] Wow. Incredible. I was visiting a little with John this morning. You know, it's amazing that some, some of our Christian friends who are so accurate in many areas of the Bible, they want to think that the church has taken Israel's place instead of God having wonderful promises that are going to be fulfilled and Israel's a testimony that's just their existence, even though they're there in unbelief.

And some people just want to ignore Israel and how God's done with Israel. No, God's not done with Israel. They're back in the land and he's got tremendous plans and he's going to keep his word. He keeps his promises.

And you can read about many of them, but it's the strength of Jehovah that accomplishes this. In chapter 63 of Isaiah, we read again of the arm of the Lord in verse 5, and it's the same verse you find in 59, 16.

But verse 5, I looked, the Lord says, and there was no one to help and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold so my own arm brought salvation to me and my wrath upheld me.

I trod down the peoples in my anger and made them drunk in my wrath and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth. That's going to happen in the future when the Lord Jesus comes back as judge. But here, 53, Isaiah 53, you read about the strength, the arm of the Lord's wonderful salvation in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

[20 : 47] Verse 2 of Isaiah 53, For he grew up before him like a tender shoot and like a root out of parched ground. The verse begins with God's perspective of his son.

He viewed him as a tender plant, planted on earth, God the son, planted on earth in a human body. And God the father viewed him with the tenderness as we viewed our children.

We viewed them that way when they were little. We view our grandchildren that way now and even as our children are adults, we still view them as tender young ones in our sight and precious to us.

I think of Solomon remembering that his parents viewed him that way. He mentions in Proverbs 4 and verse 3, when I was a son to my father, tender, and the only son in the sight of my mother.

Then he taught me and said to me, let your heart hold fast my words and on. You know, think of that time when you took your children, you took your child to the bus stop for the first day of school.

[22 : 09] Oh, and you're wondering, well, I protected my child and my child's been home with me and been safe and now he's going out into the wild world. What's going to happen? And we're certainly hoping for the best, aren't we, for our children when they go off to school, when they leave for any particular reason because they're tender to us.

Do you ever think of what a sacrifice it was for the father to send his son into the world with both knowing the response he would receive? It wasn't going to be good.

He was made vulnerable for you and me. You know, I was thinking back when I went to school and I didn't think of it at the time, of course, going in kindergarten, first grade, but I was the firstborn son of Dr. Howell who was loved and respected in the community and so the teachers would naturally look on favor, look with me with favor.

I had that advantage. Think of the Lord Jesus when he came, after he grew up, after he was invested in public ministry, there were those who accused him, we were not born of fornication like you were.

You know, Israel's not that big. Nazareth wasn't that big. People knew Mary was expecting before she and Joseph came together in marriage and some started the rumor, I think Mary got together with a Roman soldier.

[23 : 43] That's another false narrative that goes out there. He didn't have the advantage of people looking on him with the favor that you and I might.

But the Lord Jesus, he was the plant that produced more fruit than anybody else to the pleasure and glory of God. He alone produced the fruit of eternal life for you and for me.

Remember he said in John 12, verse 24, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. And you and I, who are believers, are some of the fruit that the Lord Jesus has produced with eternal value.

And of course, he personified the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. And his fruit was always available, always available for those who hungered for God and approached him on earth for help.

You think of the fruit tree, it's, the fruit isn't for itself, it's always for others. And the more bountiful the fruit on the tree or the plant, the more it, the more it bends over, the more it gets closer to the ground, easier to access for the ones who want to pick it.

[25 : 04] I think of the Lord and how humble he was, meek and lowly of heart, the one who can give rest for the soul. As the Father looked down from heaven and saw his Son, he saw him as a root out of dry ground, spiritual life in a spiritually desert area, planet Earth.

We look at the planets and we think, ah, they're dead, there's no life out there. Well, spiritually, there's no life down here, except there was life in this root out of dry ground.

The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we continue in verse two, we find how God's Son appeared to mankind. Different.

He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to him. His physical form is that of an ordinary guy.

He wasn't genetically gifted with a muscular frame that impressed others. He didn't handle himself as if he was someone special, that he was royalty.

[26 : 14] He wasn't especially handsome. Have you ever been concerned about that? The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, came with a human body. He was not especially handsome.

on the outward appearance. He didn't turn heads when he was walking down the street. People didn't want to be his friend because he was so good looking.

He knew what the purpose of his body was. And we need to realize the purpose of our body. You're just a clay pot. It needs to be broken for the treasure to come out. The treasure that God's put in through your mouth, through your life.

You know, the Lord Jesus, we find these same two words, stately form and appearance. Back in chapter 53, his appearance, what he looked like, his visage, your Bible may say, was marred more than any man.

He gave up his body. He wasn't concerned about preserving and decorating it. And his form, the shape of his body, general shape of his body, his form was marred more than the sons of men.

[27 : 19] You know, we spend a lot of time decorating the outside and it's good to be clean. But, you know, it's going.

It's fading away. And it seems to go pretty fast the older you get. I can remember a time when I'd wipe the hair out of my face and it'd fall down my face.

Oh, there it is. There it is, up there now. And then, if you want to impress somebody that in your older age you're healthy, you're going to suck in the gut and, I mean, you only hold it so long before it goes back to its natural shape.

It's just kind of the way it is. But we all have bodies that were designed by the master. According to Isaiah, or Psalm 139, you know, your body was God's design.

And I think we're outwardly attractive to him because he was the one who made and gave us the body of his choice. Just like when you were born, your parents may have thought you were so beautiful and others thought you looked like a wrinkled prune.

[28 : 33] God is the creator father of your body. And it was a good thing in his sight. Man looks on the outward appearance.

It's just so natural for us, isn't it? God looks on the heart. And so we see some people as attractive, we see some people as not so attractive, and we're just partial towards those that we deem to be attractive, and we want to get to know the beautiful people around us, and at first our tendency may be to ignore those that we don't think are so attractive.

the older we get, the less important that becomes, because we realize the real person is on the inside. God didn't create a body for his son that would give him an outward advantage.

God wanted us to see the value of his son by faith through hearing him speak like no other man, and seeing him act like no other man. God wanted mankind to see that his son was gold on the inside.

Where God looks and where it counts. So to this day, we have no photographs of the Lord Jesus. We have no accurate portraits of the Lord Jesus.

[29 : 47] I mean, people make up their idea of what he might have looked like. We don't have anything that's real. You know, in his day, the Caesars, oh, there were busts made of the Caesars, and you see them in Rome to this day.

Nobody made a bust of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think God arranged it so that nobody would know what he looked like on the outside because that's not where the important part is. We know he had a beard.

So did every other man in that day that could grow one. We also know his beard was ripped out on crucifixion day. We know he wore a robe, but everybody else wore a robe too.

So his appearance was that of an ordinary guy, and we don't know much about his outward appearance. But Peter wrote a letter to believers who hadn't seen him saying, you haven't seen him, but you love him.

How can this be? Don't you have to see somebody to love that person? Well, definitely not. According to the word of God, I know his heart and love for me by what he said and by what he did.

[30 : 54] I know he's golden on the inside. At the summer camps, I gave the illustration of grandma to the campers. You get a lot of campers from broken homes.

As you know, there's no fee charged to come to camp at Storybook. So you get a lot of people whose dads aren't there, whose moms are struggling, struggling with this or that, or a lot of campers or dads in prison, but they can still come to camp and hear the word of God.

We're so thankful for that. But the person who cares the most about many of these is grandma. And if you had a good grandma, even if you had a, whether you had a good family or not, you thank the Lord for grandma.

I remember going to, I had a good family, but we'd go to grandma's in the summer for a week and, oh wow, we ate all the gingerbread cookies grandma made as much as we wanted. We drank all the pop we could hold.

We watched all the TV. In the afternoon, as the world turns, anybody remember As the World Turns? Soap operas, that was all that was on, but we were taking advantage of our privilege to just do anything.

[32 : 00] Remember, grandma was scared we'd go swimming whenever we wanted. Grandma and grandpa would see to it. But you know, you put grandma up in a beauty contest, unless it's with other grandmas, I don't know if they do things like that, but grandma's not, not the one who's the most beautiful on the outside, but you know how beautiful your grandma was.

These kids at camp, they know how beautiful grandma is because she cares, cares about them and provides for them. And that's what counts. And you can be attracted to someone you read about in a book.

I don't know how many readers are left, it's becoming kind of a lost art. But if you're a reader, you've been attracted to people you've read about in books. I can remember fiction books I've read.

You know, To Kill a Mockingbird, I was attracted to Atticus. You know, a remarkable character presented there, and it's a fictional character. I remember, well, Les Misérables, you know, the hero in that story.

These people that are attractive, even in the fictional books. Think of Charles Dickens' novel, A Tale of Two Cities.

[33 : 11] I'm just thinking of the person who snuck into prison to be executed in the place of someone who had done him a favor. Wow. And a very attractive person. And yet, these are fictional characters.

There's no one more attractive than the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, as presented by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

And just quickly, I'll wrap up in a couple minutes here. In the future, every eye will see him. We don't know what he looked like when he first came. We can get an image of him on the cross and all the blood and shame and the crown of thorns on him.

But when he comes in the future, nobody's going to see him or imagine him to be somebody who's weak, as some falsely do when they read about his first humble advent.

He said he's going to come as the glorified King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We have a description of him in Revelation. Eyes blazing with fire, white hair, his face glowing like the sun and his brilliance.

[34 : 21] We have those description of him when he rides in the white horse, blazing eyes. He's coming in judgment. No one's going to be overlooking him at that time. If many saw him on crucifixion day at the second coming, every eye is going to be glued to him when he comes again.

And a very sad note is that he's the last person many will see before they're ushered into the lake of fire at the great white throne judgment.

How sad. It's not, it's not what he wanted, but some who chose to openly reject him or just not take him seriously enough to trust him as the one to save you from sins.

Don't let that be, don't let that be your choice. On the bright side, those of us who believers, we're going to see him constantly. We're going to see him in glory and we're going to rejoice that he's been displaying the glory that he always deserved to display.

It's who he really is and we'll see him this way forever and ever. And the blazing eyes, they're going to be blazing with love, non-stop love for you and for me, for each of us who are the children of God.

[35 : 34] Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this marvelous presentation by Isaiah as you passed it on to him concerning your son. We thank you for the future we have to look forward to.

And it's becoming, well, it's becoming darker and darker on planet earth and yet that's not where our focus is going to be. Help us to keep our eyes and our hearts and our minds in your word for the hope that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, the living hope and with the blessed hope of his return before us.

I thank you for my brethren here. Strengthen them as the days go. We look to you in Jesus' name. Amen. to hear that. Amen. What are you going to do?

Everything you want to leave contact us o t- need to look for it When the Feel is gotta be outside the jemand through the river and as the hope of there in the