

The key to blessing

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[0:00] These next chapters in Isaiah actually have a lot to say about human nature. And I don't know what your view of human nature is.

! Many people who I think, if you ask them in reason, they would say, well we're evolutionary! random biological machines.

That's the sort of BBC version of what, well some part of the BBC version of what human beings are. But if you listen to the BBC, they don't actually believe that. They might take this view that we are sort of gods and goddesses who strangely have value. Why would we have value if just evolutionary random biological machines? Human beings who have rights and dignity. And this view, sort of rather high view of human beings, we can save ourselves.

I think there's a quote which says, I am the captain of this ship, the master of my soul. I meant to look it up, but I didn't find who said that. That idea, there's a very strong view of human nature. And you could find that expressed in the view where people say there's a little bit of good in everyone. It's an interesting question. There's a little bit of good in everyone.

I remember when I was doing, I can't remember, I was doing some, might have been some work when I was a school teacher. Somebody said, oh Philip, you've restored my faith in human nature. Which, because I don't, as a Christian I don't have faith in human nature. I don't, I don't, I don't have faith in human nature. Anyway, the Christian view is rather subtle because it says that human beings all have tremendous dignity because we're all made in the image of God. That's the good bit. We're made in the image of God. But the moral part of it is that there's not a single bit of the human makeup that isn't messed up by sin. We're completely messed up by sin. So we're this peculiar mixture. We have the dignity of how we're being in the image of God. But morally, unless God does something, every part of us is touched by sin. The usual example of this is a ruined castle. You can see what it was supposed to be like and what the dignity that this castle used to have. But not a single room is intact.

[2:25] It's all broken. And that's a bit like human nature. C.S. Lewis in one of his books, one of his children's books, said this. This is put into the mouth of the lion Aslan. You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve, said Aslan. And that is both honor enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth, said Aslan. Be content.

I don't know what the context of it was. It's a very good quote. And on that view, what human beings need is not sort of retraining, but total regeneration. And I'd like to try and persuade you that that is exactly the agenda of these bits of Isaiah that we're looking at. And that the amazing thing is that that is exactly what God plans to do. To remake people, like from the bottom of the bottom of the bottom of the bottom of the bottom of the Bible, to remake them totally, to regenerate a race of people and have them for his own people.

So that's what I think this is about, and I'll try and persuade you of it. If you look at the first few verses, this is what the Lord says. He says, maintain justice, do what is right, for, notice this bit, my salvation is close at hand, and my righteousness will soon be revealed.

And that puts these chapters on tiptoe, saying, this God is going to do what he said he will do, the promises that he promised, he will do it. My salvation, he says, is close at hand, and my righteousness, that's to say, me putting everything right, me doing the right thing that I promised to do, all of that, that's, what does it say, will soon be revealed. So we're thinking, wow, what's that going to look like? And the chapters, I think, tell us about that.

So this morning, I'm going to try and do these things. We need to set it into context, so that's the zeroth point. Two main things. Who is going to be blessed as he has this plan of salvation?

[4:56] And what is the blessing that the plan brings? So those two questions, who is going to be blessed, and what is the blessing? And the verses that Christopher read to us, I think, address exactly that. Who is going to be blessed? What sort of quality of person is this? And what is the blessing that it brings? And I'm going to say, thirdly, that there's an important omission.

There's something that these verses don't say. They're said later on in the chapters, but it's important that we realise that there is an omission. Something is left out. Right. I need to do the, are you with me so far? Yeah? Okay. So we'll do a little bit of context and background.

Now you might remember from last time, this is the history of the people to whom he's speaking. And he's prophesied through this period here, the nation was invaded by Babylon, taken into exile, and amazingly brought back into the land. And that's the situation that Isaiah is sort of addressing. That was the history of it. I won't do the history all over again. Incidentally, and I won't stop on this, these three figures in the background, anybody remember from previously who those figures are? The servants, yes. In the previous chapters, the servants of the Lord had been described. And those look, is this the same servant three times or is it three different servants?

[6:34] Well, that's another sermon in that. But that's the background. It is actually graphically the background and theologically the background that there has been a servant at work. Anyway, I digress.

The background of this, theologically and morally, is the chronic, meaning long-lasting, the chronic sin of Israel.

And Israel has been unchanged by the following things. Privilege. In Deuteronomy, God says, I have chosen you out of all the nations of the earth, not because you're the most numerous, because you're the least of all people.

And I've set my love upon you just because I've loved you. And that's an enormous privilege that was given to this nation. But the history proves that the giving of privilege does not change the hearts of people in and of itself.

Warnings. Throughout this history, the prophets warned people and said, you've received promises from God. He's, as it were, offered to be your God and said, walk with me.

[7:55] And constantly and consistently you've refused to do this. And the warnings had no effect. We have the covenant set in place through Moses and we have the prophets who are like covenant policemen who say, this is what the law says, you should be doing this.

Warn and correct and chivy and upbraid the people. And the warnings, as we will see, have no effect. Because the northern kingdom went into exile and even the southern kingdom went into exile.

And the discipline of being sent away. 70 years in exile. God had centuries of patience. And then he said, enough is enough.

You still won't learn. Well, I'll send you away. See if you will learn from that. And they didn't learn from that. Even that was not enough to change the heart.

It's a sad, sad truth. And the unmerited favour of being brought back and given, as it were, I put this sort of humanly speaking, a second chance. God says, you know, I'm not going to give up.

[9:02] I'm not going to give up. I'll bring you back. And what these chapters in Isaiah are saying is, actually, we're still stuck. We're still in that situation of our sin.

The chronic sin of Israel. And I'm going to say that Israel is, in fact, no different from any other nation in this. It's just that they're put centre stage as a sort of demonstration of this in large capital letters.

As the human condition. So whatever ethnic background you and I have, the same sort of thing is exactly true of us. We've been given many gifts and favours.

When Paul goes to the rural community of somewhere, which I forget, they misunderstand the news he's bringing. And he says to these people, he has not left himself.

He, that's God, has not left himself without testimony. He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops and their seasons. He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.

[10:03] So God has been speaking in every good joke you've enjoyed and every good meal you've enjoyed. And you haven't been grateful. He says you haven't turned to the living God. So it's true across the nations.

God sends his favour and people don't listen. People can be warned by God's providence. Our whole world is being warned at the moment over this matter of climate change.

We're not to interpret it as simply a scientific and political thing. It's a spiritual thing. God is saying, this is my world. You ought to be worshipping me.

And of course, does that message get through? Well, warned by God's providence and disciplined. Well, God disciplines us in our lives, doesn't he?

Puts us through things, different situations. And it ought to lead each and every human being to say, God be merciful to me, a sinner. That's where it ought to lead.

[11:03] The chronic sin of Israel is part of the background. And the chronic idolatry of the nations is part of the background. There's a little map.

Jerusalem, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon. And just in looking at that map, we see an analysis of the moral and spiritual context.

The Assyrians, notably cruel as a nation. Warlike. Treating people as things rather than people.

An appalling sinful attitude. Babylon, which goes down in history as the nation of pride. That thinks it can build its way up to God through technology and become like God.

Boasting against God. Setting itself up as a God. The sin of pride and self-exaltation. And of course, Egypt over here. In Isaiah, Egypt is the nation that claims you can rely on me.

[12:03] We'll sort you out. And then it turns out to be completely false. It's said of Egypt, it's like a stick that breaks when you lean on it and splinters and cuts your hand.

The human resources that claim to see us through. Can you remember? On black and white television, there was a little sort of cartoon thing.

A little man was in a castle and he knocks on the castle and says, get the strength of the insurance companies around you. I'm not even remembering it properly.

But the idea that insurance or political skill or financial wizardry can make us really safe in life. Well, it can't. And so, the long and short of it is, as the Apostle Paul says, Jew and Gentile alike are under sin.

That that is the nature of the human condition. Lost in sin. Jew and Gentile alike under sin. And as Paul is going to say, quoting actually this section, there's no one who's righteous.

[13:14] No, not one. Theologically, you would call it total depravity. Not meaning that everybody is as bad as they possibly could be.

But meaning that there is not a single bit of human makeup which is untouched by sin. Right. So, that was the context.

Now, the two questions were, who is blessed and what is the blessing? So, let's read it here. So, Isaiah 56. Blessed. So, verse 2. Blessed is the man who does this.

The man who holds it fast. Who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it. Who keeps his hand from doing evil. Sorry, I've lost my place.

Yes. Let no son of a foreigner. Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the Lord say, The Lord will surely exclude me from his people. Let not any eunuch complain, I am only a dry tree.

[14:11] But this is what the Lord says to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths and who choose what pleases me. Etc. So, there's two people here. The eunuch and the foreigner.

So, I've done the eunuch with no facial hair. So, I've given him a pink face. That's the best I could do on that. And the foreigner is literally the son of a stranger. And I've given him enormously peculiar hair.

Because he's a foreigner. He's a strange guy with a strange haircut. And he has a flag which I sincerely hope is not the same as anybody's flag here. I just meant to do a foreign flag there.

Now, the point being, this is Old Testament. This is within the framework of the covenant with Moses. And both these people are specifically excluded from the blessings of God's people.

Both of these people would normally count themselves as excluded. And what Isaiah is doing is saying, I can see where God's plan is heading. And I can see a time when these people excluded

from belonging and excluded from blessing will be included.

[15:22] That's what he's looking forward to. So, he's looking forward to a time when people who would normally be excluded are included. And maybe you're sitting here this morning thinking, well, I'm excluded.

I've come and meet all these nice Christian people. But that's not me. And it could never be me. You might be thinking, because I'm excluded. And you might say, I'm excluded perhaps because of my past sexual life.

Or you might say, I'm excluded because of my past spiritual life. The stuff I used to get into. Or the stuff I've never got into. Or you might say, I'm excluded ethically because I wouldn't like to tell you the things I've done in my past.

Or you might say, I'm excluded emotionally because you think, well, I'm just not the sort of person who does religion and prayer and stuff like that. Or you might say, I'm excluded financially because I've got a lot more money than these people.

I've got a lot less money than these people. Or you might say, I'm excluded by the lifestyle that I used to live. Or excluded by my personal history. Or excluded by just what goes on inside my inner foulness.

[16:31] And the good news here is that the gospel has an invitation for the excluded people. And says, you can come, even you can come and find the blessing, the total blessing that is described here.

Jesus said to me, come to me all you who labour in a heavy laden. And I will give you rest.

Remember Jesus touched the leper. And Jesus dealt with the prostitute.

And Jesus brought all sort of excluded people in. So, who's going to be blessed? Well, it's these people are excluded. Let's just say a little bit about the framework that this is in.

This is in what Christians call the Old Covenant, the Moses Covenant, the Old Testament. And the Old Testament has a purpose. It is to lead forward to something else.

It goes beyond itself to something else. You see it in this section here. It's saying, although standard Moses Covenant, eunuchs are excluded, foreigners are excluded.

[17:41] Actually, there's a promise that they'll be included somehow in the future. Somehow. Now, and the Apostle Paul says, puts it this way, that the Old Testament is a schoolmaster to take us forward to Christ.

First, when our kids learnt the violin, they had a teacher who said, this is how you play the violin. You pick up your left hand, pick up the violin. You pick up the right hand, pick up the bow, put the violin there, the bow there.

Sorry, like that. And that's how you play. So, it was a sort of, it was good training. But when the kids could play the violin, you didn't have to go through all that. You did the thing that you're getting at, which is to go like this.

And he says that the law has a teaching purpose, which, when you get to the thing which is being taught, some of the teaching methods sort of drop away.

There's a school teacher bringing his children to maturity. The law prophesies beyond itself. And in the law, we have holy spaces.

[18:59] So, it's talking about, verse 7, my holy mountain. And it talks about my house of prayer. Meaning, a literal mountain, when it was originally written.

And meaning, a literal house, or temple. But, the law points beyond that to not a temple built with bricks and mortar.

And not a literal mountain. It points beyond itself. So, in terms of holy spaces. In terms of holy times. So, we'll see quite a bit about the Sabbath. Which is, particularly, has a significance within the Old Covenant.

And it talks about holy people. And it does it in terms of ethnicity and things like that. And it's pointing to something beyond that.

So, those Old Testament excluded people. In case I didn't explain what a eunuch was. It would be a bloke whose reproductive organs have actually been cut or squashed or spoiled in some way.

[20:06] So, he's reproductively damaged. And would be, therefore, disqualified from coming into the temple, for example. And the foreigner is ethnically disqualified.

Deuteronomy 23.1 says, No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord. And likewise, the nations were outsiders. They were unclean and excluded. Right. So, let's see. What is said about these people who will be strangely included? So, what it says here, something about Sabbath.

So, verse 2. Blessed is the man who does this. The man who holds it fast. Who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it. And keeps his hand from doing any evil.

We have a similar thing in verse 4. The eunuchs who keep my Sabbath. Who choose what pleases me. And hold fast to my covenant. And the matter of Sabbath comes up in various places as well.

[21:10] Worth having a look at how this operates. So, if you're a person who knows where places are in the Bible, you might as well look at these. If you're not, don't get confused.

I'll read them to you anyway. But the other prophets do something quite similar. So, Ezekiel 20, verses 10 to 12, says this.

This is Ezekiel, another prophet in the time of the exile. Ezekiel 20, verse 10.

Therefore, I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the desert. I gave them my decrees and made known to them my laws. For the man who obeys them will live by them.

Also, I gave them my Sabbaths. There's a plural there. As a sign between us. So, they would know that I, the Lord, make them holy.

[22:17] It's noticeable that here, a Sabbath is a particular sign between God and Israel. There's a certain sign of that specific relationship.

And if you, I said verse 13. The people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees, but rejected my laws. Even though the man who obeys them will live by them. They utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So, I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the desert. But for the sake of my name, I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations.

And what else have I got? Verse 15. I brought them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Because they rejected my laws and did not follow my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths.

I'm sorry. I've read that wrong, haven't I? It's a list of their sins.

[23:27] They rejected my laws, did not follow my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths. For their hearts were devoted to their idols. And in 18 to 20.

I said to their children in the desert. Do not follow the statutes of your fathers or keep their laws or defile yourselves with their idols.

I am the Lord your God. Follow my decrees. Be careful to keep my laws. Keep my Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God. So again you get this idea that the Sabbath, there's a specific particular significance for Israel as being a sign between God and Israel of their relationship.

And I've noted down some other texts as well which I think say pretty much the same thing. But you're very welcome to look them up. Ezekiel 22 verse 6 to 12 lists various shortcomings of Israel including desecrating the Sabbath.

And Jeremiah has got the similar sort of thing. So it's a strong theme in the prophets of ancient Israel. Now we're not in that covenant are we?

[24:48] We're in the new covenant. So you've got to be very careful moving from the old covenant to the new covenant. And I'd say the Sabbath has several strands. It is the day of rest modelled on God's Sabbath which was an unending rest.

You notice in Genesis there is no end to the Sabbath. All the other days have sort of an end but the Sabbath has no end. And it sort of puts into God's creation the fact that he made stuff with a view to an unending, glorious, enjoyable rest.

That's how God set up the world. The Sabbath is a sign for Israel of her special relationship with the Lord. So where am I going with this?

I'm saying that as we look at this in the new covenant we've got there's a creation aspect. We are made in God's image. God is a Sabbath. God looks forward to rest.

And we as creatures similarly have built into us a need for rest. And I would say a one day in seven rest here on earth and an eternal rest in the world to come.

[26:12] The New Testament is quite specific that we're liberated from slavery to special days, months and seasons and years. It's quite specific about that. We're not under the old covenant in that sense.

And the new covenant never presses the button which says you are forbidden to work on one day on Sunday.

It never says that because of course the Christians in the New Testament couldn't have lived under that because they were in the Roman Empire. It was a work day. I mean they did make a point of meeting in the evening.

But the button is never pressed which says God forbids you to work on Sunday. The New Testament never says that because it would have been unworkable.

But what the button that the New Testament does strongly press is this. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together. So if we have an opportunity to meet together as we're doing and as we have a day that we can do that.

[27:15] The New Testament says you jolly well need to get there. You need to be with God's people. You should not program into your week deliberately not being with God's people.

You should let us not give up the habit of meeting together. Hebrews 10.25. I'm very grateful to Pastor Les Hill who preached on that very early in my time as a student here.

And he did a wonderful way of making a very strong thing. And so that's remained with me. It's a good text to live by. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together.

To keep on meeting together. So I'm going to bring two points out of this, the eunuch. I'm going to say, number one, as New Testament Christians, this theme speaks to us of the ordering of time. So that God's values and kingdom and purposes put everything else into its proper subordinate place.

[28:26] God is the Lord of our time and the Lord of our week. And his values and his kingdom and his purposes put everything else into its proper place.

Not the other way around. If you did it the other way around, you'd say, well let's get everything else into place. And if there's a bit of space and time left over for God, okay.

And if there isn't, hard luck. God says, no, you don't do it that way around. You do it the other way around. You put my values, my kingdom, my purposes over the whole of your diary.

And that's the way you order. And everything else falls into place around that. Using time to be with God and his people is a priority.

Rather than achieving the highest academic degree. I know students wrestle with this. But what good is it having a first if you've lost your soul?

[29:29] What good is it having a highest PhD from Princeton or wherever if you've lost your soul? Get a proper proportion of what's important in life.

Or earning the maximum possible money. What good is it to have a business empire rivaling that of Bill Gates if you've lost your soul?

What good is that? You have to get things into their proper proportion. And I think that's the theme that this is. And then my second point on this is living life with eyes on the eternal rest.

That's what the Jewish Sabbath pointed to. For them it was a weakly reminder that there was a rest in store. I don't think the Sabbath was ever just about work-life balance.

It was always about what does the future hold? It was always about that. And it was always saying here's one day in seven which reminds us that there's an eternal rest.

[30:38] And that's how we're to live as Christians, isn't it? We're to have our eyes lifted. There remains a Sabbath for the people of God.

There remains a rest for the people of God. Let us make every effort to enter that rest. It says Psalm 95. That is what we're to remind ourselves of every week.

So, we looked at who is blessed. Well, the eunuch who honors the Sabbath is blessed. And here's something important which offers hope to the excluded.

Now, who else was blessed? The son of the foreigner. Let's see what's said about him. Let's go back to Isaiah 56. Who's going to be blessed?

The man who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, who keeps his hand from doing any evil. And the foreigner who has bound himself to the Lord. Let him not say, the Lord will exclude me from his people.

[31:53] And let not any eunuch complain, I'm only a dry tree. For this is what the Lord says to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me, who hold fast to my covenant.

I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters. And verse 6. And the foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, to worship him.

Those are the people who are going to be blessed. So, let's look at the foreigner. I'm just trying to pick them out as two separate strands here. What does this foreigner do? He joins himself to the Lord. Verse 6.

It's in verse 3. He joins himself. It is, isn't it? He bound himself to the Lord. And verse 6. The foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord. So, the foreigners can be joined to the God of Israel. It says in verse 6. To serve him. To be his servants. It says to love the name of the Lord.

[32:58] To love him. To worship him. And to keep the Sabbath without profaning it, as we looked at already. What's going on with this person?

They're holding fast to the Lord. Holding fast to my covenant. Verse 6. Something here. Something here. In this inner relationship.

Which. Is more important. Than their ethnic exclusion. Something in their heart. That transcends. Ethnic exclusion.

And if you begin to think about it. You think. How can that be? How can a foreigner hold the covenant.

If the covenant says foreigners can't come in? It seems impossible for a foreigner to enjoy the blessings of being a Jew. Without becoming a Jew.

[33:57] But if he became a Jew. He wouldn't be a foreigner. But God welcomes foreigners. Do you see the issue here? And if we go back. To Abraham. That's what God has always had in mind.

The promise of Abraham. All nations will be blessed through you. Now Abraham has his own family line. But through him. All nations of the earth will be blessed.

And how does that work? And of course Isaiah would be thinking about this. Because he's thinking. Right back in chapter 2. So the nations stream up the hill.

The mountain of the Lord to the house of the Lord. And they're nations. They're foreigners. They're not Jews. They're foreigners. How does that work? How can foreigners come?

And the Apostle Paul. I'm sure would have thought about this. Very very hard. And he would have come to the conclusion. As he does in Romans 2. Verse 8. Which I'll read to you.

[35:00] He says. Do you know. I think this is the. No. He wouldn't have said I think. He said this is it. This is really what it's about. In the wonderful step change of the New Testament.

He would say. A man is not a Jew. If he is only one outwardly. Nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.

No. No. A man is a Jew. If he is one inwardly. And his circumcision is circumcision of the heart. By the spirit.

Not by the written code. He says. That's really what God has always been looking for. That's what he's always been aiming for. People who are changed in the heart.

People who belong. Because of what's gone on in the heart. Who is blessed. In the new covenant. And this is what Christopher read to us.

[36:03] Paul says to a church. Which has got Jews and Gentiles in it. And he says to the Gentiles. You know you guys. You didn't ought to be here. You don't belong here.

But you are here. You were separate. From Christ. And you were excluded. From citizenship in Israel.

And you were foreigners. To the covenants of promise. And you had nothing going for you. You were without hope. And you weren't anywhere near God. You were without God. And you were in this big mess.

Called the world. But now. In Christ Jesus. You are brought near. Through the blood of Christ. Jesus Christ has done something. So remarkable. So history changing. So world changing. That you. Foreign.

[36:56] Rubbish guy people. Can be brought in. To this wonderful. Promise. And kingdom. You're no longer excluded. And for most of us. That's the only reason we're here. Isn't it?

This wonderful. Thing. That Christ has accomplished. To bring us. Into his kingdom. And I could ask. Has that reached you? Has it reached you yet?

Don't be satisfied. With just coming along. And enjoying. The singing. And the company. And everything else. Don't miss. On God.

Doing this. Right inside. That's the important bit. And you get a. A sense of it. From what Isaiah 56. Is saying. He's talking about. Joining.

And serving. And loving. And worshipping. And looking forward. In this sort of. Sabbath way. To. Rest.

[37:54] And rest eternal. And holding fast. To those things. Has God done that. In your heart. So you say. That's me. That's exactly where I'm at. A stranger. For most of us here.

Who. We. We. We. We. Come as strangers. And foreigners. But. He wonderfully. Accepts us. Isn't that grand? It's a wonderful thing. Isn't it? And if you haven't got it.

Then ask with all your heart. That it may be so. Really. Really. I would honestly say. It would be a heartbreaking thing.

For you. To have come along to church. Once. Twice. Many times. And not. Got the fact. That it's a changed heart. That God wants.

Ask him about that. Ask him to do it. That's. Where blessing is. Now. So I said. Who was blessed? Well. The eunuch is blessed.

[39:02] The foreigner is blessed. And what is the blessing? So let's look at these. Verses that describe. What the blessing is. So I'll just go through those. From verse five. Well. To the eunuch.

You see. Who was incapable of reproduction. And wouldn't. Oh. Sorry. I'm getting ahead of myself. Two things. I'm going to say. An everlasting name. And communion with God.

Right. And I just stop to say. Once again. This is all expressed. In Old Testament language. It's all expressed. In the language. Of the Mosaic covenant. So let's do this.

An everlasting name. Now the eunuch. As I said. There was the impossibility. Of reproducing. Of reproducing biologically. And I'm going to stop and say. In New Testament times.

It's still a good thing. We're still human. It's still good to be married. It's still good to have children. But. It is not essential. To blessedness. To be married.

[39:58] And it is not essential. To blessedness. To have children. And the apostle Paul. Said. Actually. I'm not married. And I can serve the Lord. Actually better.

By being unmarried. So please. Jesus talked about. Eunuchs. And he says. Some people have chosen. To be eunuchs. For the sake of the kingdom. And that's fine. Jesus himself.

Wasn't married. Was he? So. It is not necessary. To be married. To be blessed. And it's not necessary. To have children. To be blessed. But what it says here. Is.

I will give. To this. Eunuch. Verse. End of verse five. An everlasting name. That will not be cut off. A memorial.

Sorry. Am I getting myself in the wrong place? Verse five. I will give. A memorial. And a name. Better. Than. Sons and daughters. Better.

[40:55] Than. Sons and daughters. I will give. A memorial. And a name. Better. Better. Than sons and daughters.

Better. Than sons and daughters. And grandchildren. Better than that. The idea of having. A name. I think. Chris wrote something about this.

In one of his emails. Didn't he? But I'll just. Pick up in. In Revelation. The promise. To one of the churches. I'll give you a new name. Jesus gave people new names.

Didn't he? He said. You're. What did he say? You're Simon. But I'm going to call you Peter. That's quite something. To change somebody's name. I mean.

That name had a meaning. It was like rock. Wasn't it? Rocky. You're Simon. What sort of name is that? You're going to be Rocky. And. The name. It describes the person.

[41:50] That Jesus changed people. By changing their names. And. The promise here is of. An identity. And a significance.

That will never be forgotten. What about that? An identity. And a significance. That will never be forgotten.

Have you ever seen those things. On the benches in the park? This bench is in the memory of. Harry. He hated this park. And everyone in it. That's a sort of.

Here's a memorial. That will never be forgotten. Have you ever done ancestry. To find out who your. Great great grandfather was.

And all that sort of thing. I got to a certain level. And I decided I wasn't going to pay. So I only got. As far as my mum. I think it's said.

[42:55] That after three generations. You're forgotten. But God says. Here's a blessing. You'll never be forgotten. Your name.

And your memorial. Will never be forgotten. As far as God says. You know. I will never. Forget you. Your significance. Will never be wiped out. An eternal.

An everlasting name. That will not be cut off. To the excluded. And the ignored. And the people. Who will never make. A headline.

Even in the Argus. God says. Actually. Your name. Will never be forgotten. You'll never be forgotten.

That's a wonderful blessing. Isn't it? For God to say that. To the people. This is the blessing. That he promises. And. Let's. Let's go a little bit. Further with this.

[43:52] So. I'm going to go. To verse. Where am I going? Verse seven. What does God say. He will do. I will bring. These people. To my holy mountain.

I will give them joy. In my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings. And sacrifices. Will be accepted. On my altar. For my house.

Will be called. A house of prayer. For all nations. The sovereign. Lord. Dears. He who gathers. The exiles of Israel. I will gather. Still others to them. Beside those already gathered.

What's the blessing here? And I just stop and say. This is all described. In. Mosaic covenant language. It's all described. In old covenant language. So. We've got mountains. And offerings. And things.

The whole thing is. In old testament language. But what it says is. I will bring. These. Verse. Seven. I've written verse six. Verse seven. I will bring.

[44:47] To my holy mountain. So. There's the. Promise. In Isaiah two. Of the. Mountain. Of the Lord. With the. Jerusalem. And the. And the temple.

And all the nations. Flowing to it. And coming near. God in the temple. He said. I'm going to bring you. I'll bring you. To my holy mountain. I'll bring you.

Up my holy mountain. And he says. I will give them joy. In my house of prayer. Come together. And pray. And this. This activity. Will not be. A chore. And a burden. And. They'll be racked with guilt. And discomfort.

And awkwardness. He'll say. For you. This will be. An activity. Of great joy. In the house of prayer. And he says. Their. Burnt offerings.

[45:43] And sacrifices. Will be. Accepted. On my altar. And there's an altar. And there's the. Enoch. And the foreigner. Offering sacrifices.

With great joy. And along with many sorts. Of other people. Let me just. Draw this. Got myself in a muddle.

Yeah. Those. That's what. That's what the text says. And what he's describing. The heart of it. Let's. Let's look at what this is really getting at.

Is real. True. Communion. With God. That's what is promised. You will really. Be able. To meet God.

You will really have access to God. And it will be a joyful thing. And then in this slide. I take it apart a little bit. The. I will give. To this. Enoch. And this foreigner.

[46:41] These people. Who don't. Are. Disqualified. And excluded. The ability. To draw near. To the God of Israel. You think.

How could I. Draw near. To the holy. Great. Glorious. God of Israel. In his majesty.
In his holiness. The angels fall down. Before him. And they cover his face. Their faces. Before him.
How could I draw near to him. And he says. You will draw near. I'll bring you.
To my holy mountain. You could put it down. You could say. Well this is the ability. To pray. I'll give
you the ability. To draw near to me.
In prayer. You know. What's the. Basic thing. The first. Almost the first thing. A Christian does.
When they become a Christian. Is to say. Heavenly father. What did Jesus teach.
[47:42] His disciples. This is how you pray. Our father. Who is in
heaven. To be able to say. To this God. Father. You know. You're sort of
waiting for the.

Get out. Go away. No. Our father. Yes. Come near. I will bring you to my holy mountain. And this
experience of joy. Did you notice it.
I'll bring them to my holy mountain. And give them joy. In my house of prayer. I will give them joy. In
my house of prayer. It's not a. He's not talking about a burden.
And a difficulty. And an awkwardness. He's saying. Your communion with God. Will be. A joy. You'll
be able to say. This is amazing. This is wonderful.

Thank you that I can pray. Thank you I can draw near. Thank you that I can hear your words. And
draw comfort from them. And. The privilege. Of offering him. Things that are pleasing.
[48:36] And this. Really struck me. When I was reading this. It says. End
of verse 7. Their burnt offerings. And sacrifices. Will be accepted. On
my altar. Their burnt offerings.

And sacrifices. Will be accepted. On my altar. It's old. Old testament. Language. Please don't. Write
to the deacons. And say. According to this text. Why haven't.

Why haven't we got. Altar in our. Our church. And. Fire regulations. Forget them. We'll. Offer a few
chickens. And stuff. Next week. We don't do that.

It's. This is old covenant. And it's changed. But the reality of it. Is there. The. Privilege. Of offering
him. Things. That are pleasing. That.

I said. That. Even. Me. Even. You. Could. Come to God.

[49:33] And. Offer him something. Do something. For him. That he says.
Oh. That's nice. Oh. That's very good. Oh. Well done.

That's a very precious thing. You know. We're very conscious. That we can do things for God. That
he would. He would frown at. We're very conscious. Of the idea.

He disapproves of things. Aren't we? His wrath. His condemnation. But here it says. That you can
bring in a place. Where. He will. Be pleased. The offerings.

That you bring. Will be. Accepted. On my altar. The writers of the Hebrews. Takes all this language.
Of sacrifice.

And says. This is. This is what. Christians do. They don't do it with animals. And fire. He says. The
sacrifice of praise. Isn't that amazing? We can come to God.

[50:27] And sing to him. And he says. Oh. That's nice. That's good. Oh.
Yeah. That's lovely. The idea that we can do that. The writer of the
Hebrews.

Says. Doing good. Giving. With such. The sacrifice. As God is well pleased. You know. That we
could do something good. Maybe.

Nobody else sees it. We've done something. For him. And God says. Oh. That was nice. Oh. That
was really. A precious thing. I really value that.

You know. The fact that we could do that. And. That's what it says. Isn't it? Their burnt offerings.
And sacrifices. Will be accepted. On my altar. The fact that we could.

We could live in a way. In which God says. Oh. That's good. Well. That was the blessing. That he.

[51:21] He gives. The name. And the. The communion with God. And what's
the important omission? Well. There is an important omission. An
important omission.

Is. How did we get from. There is no. No one righteous. No not one. How do we get from there.
Over to here. Here's somebody who keeps my covenant.

And who. Values the things that I value. And whom I'm pleased with. How do we get from there to
there? Doesn't say does it. Doesn't tell us that bit. At least. Not here it doesn't. But.

It's important to notice. That that's an omission. The. Chronic failure of Israel. And the chronic sin of the nations.

Tells us. That that's what human nature is like. By itself. So if I can use. New Testament language. No. Human being.

[52:16] Can be like this. By his or her own. Her own. Flesh. Flesh. Meaning. Human capacities.

Minus God. So. Nobody moves from. Being in sin. To being. This sort of person. By being clever. And nobody moves from here.

To here. Because of their ethnicity. God doesn't say. Passport. Oh yeah. That's fine. Move over here. Nobody. Moves from here. To here. Because.

Intrinsically. They're very spiritual. You know. Even things like. Meditation. And. All that sort of stuff. God says. Yeah. No. Not really interested.

It's. That's all part of our sin. Actually. And by moral effort. You remember the apostle Paul said. You know. I was the one who had the most moral effort of anybody. I kept those laws.

[53:13] Till. You know. Gritted my teeth. And I. I kept them more than anybody else. And I was a Hebrew of Hebrews. And. As to keeping the law. I was a Pharisee. You couldn't fault me on that.

And did it get me over to there? Absolutely not. By the works of the flesh. No one will be. Justified. And I put luck. Just lucky.

I just happened to be lucky. God favoured me. Out of luck. It doesn't work like that either. But there is. What is omitted. In this section.

But what will be. Emphasised. In. A few sections. Further on. Is. God. Doing this. For somebody. God. Intervening. And transforming. And changing. And that's why that prayer comes. Oh that you would render heavens and come down.

[54:08] And it's people in this place. Saying. Oh God we are. Stuck in our sin. Oh that you would. Rend heaven. Tear heaven open. Come down with your almightyness.

Change my heart. Change my life. Change my situation. And only then. Can I become one of these people. Who holds fast to your covenant. Do.

For me. And in me. What I cannot do for myself. And that. Is. The omission. That's the bit. That isn't stated.

Here. But that's the bit I want to leave. Leave us with this morning. Maybe you have moved. From there to there. And. how good to remind oneself it wasn't me who did that it was the Lord who did it for me wasn't it? Once I was blind I couldn't see but you opened my eyes you gave me a new heart you gave me new life you moved me from death to life by your grace thank you Lord for what you've done and if you're still stuck over here I urge you to pray and ask and keep on asking until God has miraculously done that total work and brought you over to this place here the prayer, I mean people pray this prayer in different shapes and forms don't they but it's saying Lord I call on you I give myself totally to you through Jesus Christ change me from this person to that person Amen we're going to sing 822 ending