

**Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 399, 11-15-2020 † Saints Triumphant**

“Lord God, you have appointed me as pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

**ISAIAH 52**

<sup>1</sup> Awake, awake, Zion,  
    clothe yourself with strength!  
Put on your garments of splendor,  
    Jerusalem, the holy city.  
The uncircumcised and defiled  
    will not enter you again.

<sup>2</sup> Shake off your dust;  
    rise up, sit enthroned, Jerusalem.  
Free yourself from the chains on your neck,  
    Daughter Zion, now a captive.

<sup>3</sup> For this is what the LORD says:  
“You were sold for nothing,  
    and without money you will be redeemed.”

<sup>4</sup> For this is what the Sovereign LORD says:  
“At first my people went down to Egypt to live;  
    lately, Assyria has oppressed them.

<sup>5</sup> “And now what do I have here?” declares the LORD.  
“For my people have been taken away for nothing,  
    and those who rule them mock,”  
declares the LORD.

“And all day long  
    my name is constantly blasphemed.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore my people will know my name;  
    therefore in that day they will know  
that it is I who foretold it.  
    Yes, it is I.”



There's a fascinating scene in the film "Fight Club" when one of the main characters drags a convenience store clerk outside in the middle of the night and threatens his life with a gun. At gunpoint he asks the clerk, Raymond, what his dreams are in life and why he hasn't made those dreams a reality. The man says he wants to be a veterinarian, but he works too much to make it happen. "I know who you are and where you live, Raymond. If you're not on your way to becoming a veterinarian in 6 weeks, you're a dead man." The store clerk runs home. Then we find out there were no bullets in the gun.

The main character explained his empty threat: "Tomorrow will be the best day of Raymond's life. His breakfast will taste better than any meal you and I have tasted." Raymond was going to wake up and feel so grateful to be alive. He was going to really live, too, and chase his greatest goal in life.

Wake up, get ready for the day, get dressed, live life! Pull yourself together, as God tells Jerusalem. Wake up to see beyond the judgment to what comes next. In God's heart, Jerusalem was still the holy city -- and would be the holy city in the eyes of everyone. She would rise from despondent grief and sorrow and live glorious once again.

In Isaiah's time, the Lord was predicting the downfall of Judah and Jerusalem. But in chapter 52, the Lord also predicted beyond that embattlement and captivity. He was foretelling relief and fulfillment to His people.

## **God Guarantees Our Tomorrow**

### 1. That we will rise from the dead (v1-2)

Awake, awake, Zion. Shake off your dust, Jerusalem. Feel the strength coming back. Get dressed in all your finery.

Compare this to the previous chapter. In Isaiah 51:23, Jerusalem's enemies said to "fall facedown that we may walk over you." God's people had sinned against God and for hundreds of years broke His heart and broke His law. They worshiped the stars, the golden calves, and the Baals. They were in spiritual bondage, dead in sin, and unable to escape death. So God sent Jerusalem's enemies against her. This was justice for their horrible sins. Sinners deserve slavery, captivity, and dark dungeons.

They were a captive people, lying on the ground in prisons, caves, & dungeons. But now God's people are commanded to shake off the dust. Awake, awake, Zion. Shake off your dust, Jerusalem. Feel the strength coming back. Get dressed in all your finery. The place where God's people gathered together will be a perfect, holy place. Sin and enemies can no longer break in and destroy.

Way back in 2019, a 20-year-old man, named Mohammed Furqan, woke up at his own funeral. He had been in an accident, his family ran out of money, and a private hospital in northern India declared him dead. The family was left traumatized, since they had come to terms with his death, and then saw his limbs twitch in the casket. What a thrill ride of emotions!

Imagine waking up in the end, when Jesus calls. Imagine shaking the dust off when Jesus commands you to do so. What will that be like? It will be just like God promised, won't it? This waking and dusting off is nothing other than the kingdom of heaven in Matthew, the Holy City that comes down out of heaven in Revelation, and the life everlasting won for us by Jesus. This waking and dusting off is no less important to all of God's New Testament people, who have the same claim to His promises and to His kingdom by faith alone.

*"We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him,"* 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.

## 2. That we will fully know His name (v3-6)

God's name is more than our present knowledge. God's name includes His titles and all revelation about Himself. In short, God's name is all that He is and does.

Notice the fact that, through Isaiah the prophet, the Lord God repeats his name. *"The Lord says," "this is what the Lord says," "declares the Lord,"* as if the Lord's speaking is bold, italicized, highlighted, and underlined. The Lord assures us that He is determined to free His people. Let's look at history from a high view: Judah suffered in succession under the three great world powers of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. Each succeeding world power out-did the other in brutality. They were guests in Egypt, then exploited and enslaved. They were assaulted by Assyria after that empire scattered ten other tribes of Israel for

good. Each oppression of the people was at the same time sin against the Lord Himself. Babylon was even worse. Babylon's mistreatment of the people and mockery of the Lord's name removed all restraints. As surely as the Lord is His name, He would quickly redeem His people.

This tells us that God's name is intimately connected with grace. He says, "*You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed*" (3). They were "*taken away for nothing*" (5) and God got nothing out of their punishment or rescue.

The human heart wants to obligate God to act because of some special human deed done, some noble human thought or intention, or some gentle words of human kindness spoken to others. Human effort does ***not*** compel God to act. He acts out of his deep love for sinners who are trapped "*like antelope caught in a net*" (51:20). He delivered them from Egypt. He destroyed the army of Sennacherib. He would send Cyrus to release the exiles from Babylon, too. In each case, God could have chosen to do nothing. But he acted instead. All of these were gracious acts of God on behalf of his sinful and rebellious people.

It is also a gracious act of God on our behalf to act and take our place in the punishment for sin. As New Testament believers, you and I know the Lord did not spend mere gold and silver on rescuing His people. He spent His holy, precious blood for His people. "*For you know that it was not with perishable things like silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect,*" 1 Peter 1:18-19. That is grace. In dying for us, He names His people as saints. He does so through baptismal grace, when they are buried with Him.

This is how we fully know God's name: In the day when our hearts are too sinful to bear, God graciously speaks the Word to create faith in them. In the day when the faithful sorrow over our sins, God graciously forgives us. In the day when our loved ones lie in the dust of this place, God graciously brings the believers in Jesus to heaven. In the day when our life seems guaranteed an end, God guarantees our tomorrow in heaven. That tomorrow will be the best day of our lives. Our meals will taste better than anything we'd ever tasted before. Our souls will rise with the dawn of His glorious face. All that He is and does is for us. Who can be against us? Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.