



## **Easter 2022**

### **Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, it is great to see you here this Sunday morning, this Resurrection Sunday morning 2022. I hope you have a great day planned. I am glad that this worship service is a part of your plan and I hope that you're not doing your taxes this afternoon. (audience laughs) One of the problems with the timing of Easter this year, it is the last day before your taxes are due. And if that's news to you, I am so sorry, so sorry. I did get my taxes done before the weekend I'm happy to report, although happiness had nothing to do with the process at all. I have a particular dislike for doing taxes. I know you do too. It's not my thing. I hate it. Hate. Like, really, really sincerely, deeply HATE it. It's a hot hatred, it's a red hot, it's a white, molten hot hatred for the process. I just hate it.

Wouldn't it be amazing if this morning I could say to you, listen, I've got good news, I've got the whole tax thing solved, not just for me, for you. I have some funky named like law that's now about to take hold. It's the Nehushtan Tax Relief Act of 2023 and it's going to solve all your tax problems. Matter of fact, it's going to take care of the fact that you will no longer have any taxes to pay. You will be exempt for the rest of your life. Not only that, it will retroactively go back and it will give you back all the taxes that you've paid for the entirety of your life. Every income tax, federal, state, sales tax, gas tax, highway tax, tolls, you know, estate taxes. Whatever taxes you've been taxed, which is a lot of taxes, it's all going to be given back to you with interest from the government.

That's the new Tax Relief Act that is coming. That sounds hard to do. It is hard to do. Somebody richer than Elon has stepped up and just said, I'm going to pay for everything for the past 100 years for everyone who gets signed up for this tax relief act. And so I would say that if this were the case and I had, you know, like brochures passed out this morning on how to apply for this tax relief act, I think I could get most of you to sign up for that. I don't care what tax bracket you're in, if you're going to get something like compounded reimbursement retroactively for all of your taxes, you're going to be all about that, right? Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Because it is. It's just an illustration. That's all it is.

But if I said I got news that's better than that, I know you'll think, well, that sounds like an inflated sales pitch, but it's not. I mean, seriously it's not. At Easter, 2022, I'm here to tell you that what we celebrate has further implications. Right? Eternal implications that are far better than you getting relief from your taxes. It's far better than having some fix to the broken tax problem. It'll go far beyond your bank account. It will have resonating effects for forever. That really is the truth. And if I had a brochure that explained it, I'll bet you'd pull it out and look at it.

And I do. It's right there on your phone, it's sitting on your lap, if you came prepared to come to a Bible church, you probably brought one. If not, we have one under the seat in front of you. And I think you would want to know, how do I apply for this, if it really is better than retroactively compounding interest to give to me in my bank account, how do I get that just with this relief act? I mean, you would say I would want to make sure that I'm signed up. If



there's some kind of application to fill out, if there's a signature to be had, if there's something I need to do to get all this free stuff, I need to make sure I do it right. I mean, you don't want to do it wrong, right?

So grab the brochure. It's a thick one. It's called the Bible. Pull it out and turn to the information that will tell you how to get this. You say, "Well, I think I already got it." OK, look at it anyway just to make sure. It's found in John Chapter 12. It's Jesus talking about fixing our ultimate problem. And it's a big, big deal. A huge deal. And Jesus, by the way, is richer than Elon. He has all what we need to fix a debt problem that you have. A lot of past back taxes that you have not paid. A debt you cannot pay yourself. I mean, you can. And if you do it so bad and egregious, you will have to pay for it for eternity. But here is the solution.

Go to the middle here of this chapter in John Chapter 12. Is that what I said? John 12. I can't remember. John 12. Jesus is struggling here just with the pain of the crucifixion, which is on the horizon and, you know, in the garden he's grieving, it's hard. He's going to do it, he's willingly going to do it. He loves the people who God is gathering to him, that he knows that he can look through the corridor of time that will include people on the other side of the planet 20 centuries later. He loves them enough to lay down his life for them. He said, "No greater love has no one than this. I'm willing to do this." It's hard and you can imagine it's hard.

And there's this weird, miraculous thing that takes place that affirms the importance of the glorification of Christ in this passage. But take a look at it beginning in verse 31, as Jesus puts it this way, "Now," speaking of his death, "is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out." That's huge, right? And we're not talking about the IRS. If you're Howard Jarvis, you think it's the IRS. No, the ruler of this world. This is a reference not to some parity in equality of strength, but certainly in a contrast between God, the God of righteousness, and this character who has been just articulated from the very beginning in Genesis Chapter 3.

We've got a ruler of the world who has messed mankind up, and he's been wreaking havoc in every generation, as John 10:10 says, "He comes to kill and steal and destroy." And misery loves company, right? When it comes to him being part of this group of beings that God created, God creates a group of beings that's more like him than we are in the sense that they are spiritual beings, a class of angelic beings. And there was one who rebelled and he took a bunch of them with him, the devil and his angels they're called, we call them demons, but they're technically angels. And that group of angelic beings, they have rebelled against God and then God creates a third class.

There's the Creator, and then there's the created class of angels and then here's the third category, human beings. And from Genesis 3, here is this tempter trying to make sure that they get involved in the misery that he's involved in and that is rebelling against the Creator. Satan says, "So I know that God said, don't eat that tree, the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But I'm going to tell you, you should do it your way. Do what you want. Put yourself first. Make your own rules. You know, if you don't pay the tax of deprivation here. Don't pay it. It's OK."



And so mankind careens into the mess that is still unfolding on your newsfeed every day. The mess that if you're honest when you look in the mirror, the moral mirror of the truth of God's standard, you say I am a mess and I need to get this fixed. "It's the spirit that's now at work in the sons of disobedience," to quote Ephesians Chapter 2. And that ruler who is kind of ruling and reining and he's trashed your life, and he really has in many, many ways even if you're not on the news feeds and heading off to the Santa Ana jail, you are a mess morally, and so am I. And he's been wreaking havoc.

But apparently this thing that took place 2,000 years ago, here Jesus is saying, "I just going to tell you he's been defeated." Now is the judgment of this world, right? That the ruler of this world will be cast out and when is that going to happen? When I'm lifted up from the earth and I'll draw all people to myself. There'll be some people who are not under the jurisdiction of this tempter anymore. "He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die." Remember he is going to be hoisted up on this tall, you know, looked like a big railroad tie only longer. And he was going to be nailed to it. He was going to bleed on it. He was going to bleed out and suffocate on it, this cross we call it. We gild it and put it around our neck and then use it as a logo for Christianity. But it's really heinous. It's a Roman torture rack. It's a horrific thing.

The Phoenicians developed this process of torturing people before they killed them, and this was like the worst and the most ignoble way to die. And the Romans perfected it and said, "This is how we're going to kill our criminals." And the Pharisees were so jealous and envious of Jesus and his following, they said, "Let's put him on one of those and let's get that to happen." And they do. And so he's lifted up, hoisted up completely naked, nude on a cross, bleeding after being beaten by Roman soldiers. And he's lifted up and he says, "If I'm lifted up like that, I'm going to draw people to myself." What a weird thing that is.

I mean, Isaiah 53 says it's like something you'd hide your face from. You would say he's marred more than any man. I mean, he's beaten, it's gross. You'd hide your kid's face from seeing this naked man being crucified on a cross. Well, there's nothing attractive about the act of the violent, naked death of Christ. But Christ says, "I'm going to do something through that act that's going to be judgment for the bad guy, and it's going to be some kind of a needed attraction in drawing people to my team." And when they're in the shadow of this cross, there's no jurisdiction of the enemy. He no longer gets to win and all the debt that he has facilitated the racking up is going to be gone.

And so that lifting up is going to pull people out from this lost race of humanity and the crowds, as they often do, they had an objection, verse 34, for "the crowd answered him," Christ, they said, "Hey, we've heard from the Law," right? That's a reference to the Old Testament, "that the Christ," that's the Greek word for the Hebrew word "Mashiach" and that means "messiah." Messiah means the ultimate leader. They would always anoint, that's what messiah means, it's like "Christos" or Christ means as we transliterated into our English text. It means to pour out the oil in a fancy like ceremony. When a king became a king, he would be anointed by the prophet, or when a priest became a priest, he would be anointed by the



high priest. They would have the oil poured on their head as a ceremony. This is the special person.

Well, there was a super, super, super special person who was coming that the Old Testament said is going to be the king of the whole world, and he's going to be a prophet and he's going to be a priest and he's going to be a king and he's going to reign forever. And so they read about that and they knew that, and they said, "Well, you're talking about dying, talking about being lifted up," and they all understood, "you're talking about the way you're going to die. We think if you're the Christ, you're not going to die, you shouldn't die. That's not what the prophets say, right? The prophets say you're going to endure forever." At Christmas you keep quoting Isaiah 9:7 about "the increase of his government there'll be no end, his reign over the world will be forever."

To speak of the Son of Man, the terminology of the promise of the Son of Man in Daniel 7, he's going to have a dominion that will never cease. He's going to be a leader who will never stop being a leader. Well, if he's going to be eternal, they were right about that, then what's the deal with the death? They're thinking, "You shouldn't be dying if you're going to be the Messiah. You claim to be the Messiah, you claim to be the Son of Man? Well the Son of Man doesn't die. And what are you talking about your dying here. We heard from the Law that Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up on a cross? Who is the Son of Man? Well, clearly not you." There's implication there.

It's not an honest question. Do you know how I know it's not an honest question? "Yeah, how do you know Pastor Mike?" Verse 35. Because Jesus said to them, "Let me answer your question." No, he didn't answer the question. I mean, we can answer the question because we know the rest of the Bible. If you don't know I can fill you in. I know the answer to this question, but he doesn't give the answer to the question. He says, "Well, listen, here's what I have to say to you who are rejecting this death that I know is not only something I promise, but it is embedded also in the Old Testament prophets."

Here's what I have to say to you, "The light is among you for a little while longer." You got just a little bit of an opportunity left here. "Walk while you have the light," which is a weird thing to say, but it's a good thing in the middle of the night unless you've memorized every, you know, placement of every piece of furniture in your house. It would be good to have a little bit of light when you're walking around at night, and if you happen to be staying at someone else's house or you're in a hotel, I hope you travel with a little mini flashlight because it's easy to stub your toe on something if you don't know where things are, you need light. If you're going to walk around, you need the light and you should be walking, you should be making decisions about your life, you should be placing one foot in front of the next in your life when you have light. "Walk while you have the light."

And he says, "I am the light." I am the light, he said that from the beginning of this book, from the first chapter. "Lest the darkness overtake you." Darkness is coming and you don't want to be in it. You want to get the light and like an usher with his little light at some opera house or something, we want to make sure you get down to where you're going with the light so that



you don't have darkness overcome you. And because if you are in that situation, the one who walks in darkness, bottom of verse 35, he doesn't know where he's going.

While you have the light, you better, now here's the personification of Christ, you better believe in the light. You better believe in who I am. Right? Here was the Christ. He was called the Word in Chapter 1. He's also called the light. The light was the life that was within men. He was the one who gives life. He's the Creator. That's how he's presented in this book. He says earlier in the stories of Christ's interaction with the leaders in Israel, he says, "I am the light of the world," so he says, "Believe in me," right? I believe in the light.

And then, you know what'll happen? You will be drawn to this person and be part of the advantage of this death. You will become sons of light. You'll be a part of this group that no longer is under the jurisdiction of the ruler of this world. And you don't want to be a part of that because when the curtain goes down and it's dark, it's a kind of darkness, it's called an outer darkness, Jesus says, where there's "weeping" and wailing "and gnashing of teeth" and you don't want to be there. So why don't you "become sons of light?"

Now, "When Jesus said these things, he departed," look at the rest of this verse, "and hid himself from them." Dude, think about that. Right? Here are these people and they have even these questions, "I don't get it. I don't get it. The Messiah is supposed to live forever. You're talking about dying. I don't get it." And he goes, dude you got a little crack in the door here. You better walk through it because the door is closing. As a matter of fact, if you don't get what I'm saying here and you're going to refuse it and you're going to stiff-arm me on all this, you don't want this relief? You don't want this problem fixed? Then see ya. Matter of fact, tomorrow when you are going to come looking for me, you're not going to find me. I'm going to move on to another place and talk to another group of people. I'm going to give this offer to another crowd, but not this crowd. Not you guys. He hid himself from them. Yikes.

The judgment of the world. I just want you to sense the reality of what we're talking about here. There's a problem and there's a person and Satan's got a bunch of henchmen. He's got an army with him of spiritual people. That's what they are. They're people who have intellect, emotion and will and they are not physical. They have access to the physical realm. But they're engaging in this planet in a way that causes bad stuff. Now are we bad as human beings? Absolutely. But all they do is aid it. They are there to push the bad, right? It's a problem that Christ says my cross has fixed. I'm going to be hoisted up on a cross and it's going to fix the problem.

When we come and gather on Easter morning, we're really here to celebrate that. We're here to say God has fixed our ultimate problem, which is not taxes. It's not, you know, it's not health, it's not, you know, housing. Here's the ultimate problem: that you have a problem, and the problem is aided and abetted and fueled by the enemy, the spiritual enemy the Bible calls Satan. Number one, if you're taking notes, it would be good to jot this down. "Know God Fixed the Real Problem." He fixed it in Christ 2,000 years ago. That's what happened. Some say, "Well, if he fixed it he didn't seem to do a very good job. It's kind of a leaky fix because I'm looking around the world and it's pretty much still a mess."



Turn with me to the end of the book, Revelation Chapter 12, Revelation Chapter 12. Here's the end of the book, the library of books, the book of Revelation, The last book of the Bible before the maps and the concordance if you have an old school Bible. And I want you to look at this description of Satan being kicked out, being cast down. It happened judicially when Christ died on a cross. It's as though you lost, you lost. You lost at least this group of people who I'm drawing to myself. And I could quote here the book of Hebrews that talks about the fact that Christ came and he took on the humanity that these people had who were in this terrible debt and they needed relief and he became one of them to represent them before God, the Creator, the Father. And then he steals them back. He ransoms them back from the enemy, and the enemy has jurisdiction over them, and he's enslaved them. But here is Christ coming and redeeming them, ransoming, pulling them out by the price of his own life.

If you were here Friday, which, by the way, I should say we should never come to Easter and think, well, let's celebrate. Here's what Easter is. Easter is an exclamation point. And if we had that, you know, like just on a piece of paper, we had to do a blank piece of paper with the exclamation where you go like, "Oh, OK, like, what's that?" Well, an exclamation point needs to come at the end of something. It has an antecedent, right? It's supposed to point back to something. What is it that we're going "ta-ta"? Well, what? About what? Right? Easter morning is the exclamation point on Friday. That's it. And so if you don't come to Good Friday or you don't understand what Good Friday is about, the exclamation point really means nothing.

And I'll put it that way as strongly as I can. The resurrection of Christ means nothing. It means nothing. It means nothing if we don't have Good Friday. I mean, it's nothing. It really, it means zero. It means nothing. And if it's all about like new starts and fresh starts and new life and Easter and eggs and jelly beans, well that part I like, but all the other stuff that we celebrate like the newness, it means nothing. It's nothing unless there's some kind of jurisdictional end to the enemy's reign and rule over us.

So let's jump into this passage and it's highly symbolic, I get that. You CPAs, speaking of taxes, you struggle with passages like this because it's highly symbolic. But the poets among us, the songwriters, you'll like this. This is filled with analogy. But take a look at it in the middle of Chapter 12 of Revelation, are you with me now? It's the brochure, it's important. We should all look at this with our own eyeballs. Verse 8. Let's just jump in the middle. "But he was defeated," we're speaking of the enemy here, Satan, "and there was no longer any place for them in heaven," right? And if you look back, it's the devil, the dragon and his angels.

Verse 9, "The great dragon was thrown down, and the ancient serpent, who is called the "Diabolos," the Devil, the one who is accusing, the one who is hostile, the one who is against, "and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." Do you want a sentence that describes the problem, the one who's in charge of the planet? Here it is. The great dragon, the serpent slithering tempter. The Diablos. The Accuser, Satan, the hostile one. I hope these words are meaningful. "The deceiver of the whole world - he's been thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the



salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, and the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

This is the picture of what the cross has done. And the cross has taken the jurisdiction of the enemy who says these people here have followed my tempting advice and they have racked up a debt. They've done it. It's like when you go on a cruise, not that anyone does that anymore, but before COVID, we would go on a cruise, right? We had, really, a cruise planned, did you remember that? I was going to preach for a cruise and the first time. All these other preachers do that with the radio ministry. They go on the cruise, they go to Alaska. We're like, "OK, we finally planned what after years, we're going to go take a cruise. It'll be really cool. I get to preach every day on this ship." And then COVID came and we didn't do it. I don't know why I said that, other than I was kind of disappointed because I was looking forward to that one. It'll come back, maybe, who knows? I don't know. Maybe not. What are we talking about? (audience laughs) Cruise ships, cruise ships.

On a cruise ship, and I have been on it and I have preached on cruise ships for different things, but I have been on it just to enjoy it as a family, and I realize just what a crazy thing they do by having you at the very beginning get your credit card out as you're going through the queue at the beginning. Have you been through this cruisers? And then they give you another card. That's kind of a trick, right? We don't want you laying your Visa down for everything because eventually you go, "I don't know. Oh, man." Chase Visa card goes down, down, down. No, no. You get that completely out of the way by we giving you another card and it's a fancy card. It looks fun.

And that card, right? We're going to give you that card and you dangled around your neck, or we give you a chip in your hand or forehead or whatever. I don't know how they do it, but you are now going to scan your way through the cruise ship and everything you and your kids do. Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep beep. Right? And then you got the cruise director, the fun guy or whatever. All he's wanting to do is get into that. He wants a scan that chip so that the end of the trip when you get off, you faint because you see how much money you spent, which you didn't really realize you were spending. The idea here is like the fun cruise director on this ship, this sinking titanic that we're on, is wanting us to continue to rack up a debt. He is the enemy, the dragon. He is the tempter. The serpent. He's cunning.

He wants you to get... I know, if you're a cruise director or work for the cruise industry, I'm so sorry. Right? But, Satan has done that to where people then at the end of their life, "Man I've racked up a horrific debt. I thought I was having fun, right? But at the end I've racked up this debt." Well, if at some point there is something that breaks that debt in time, you'd think, OK, well, then it's over, right? Everything's good.

Well, we'll skip intentionally verse 11, but start in verse 12, "Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them!" Now, who dwells in heaven? People who are done with this earth. They get their reward. They go on "to live is Christ, to die is gain," they get promoted. "But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because



he knows his time is short!" So he's still going, right? But in reality, what if you're a part of the heavenly citizenship? You have a place in that, you have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? You are forgiven. You're a child of the King. You were drawn to Christ and you're on his team. You have that forgiveness. The debt on your card is no longer. It's been paid in full. Right?

Well, then you still have to deal with the torture of the enemy. You're still on a cruise ship where everyone's racking up a debt, but your debt has been paid for. And the point is, you've been told by Christ, don't swipe it anymore. Right? You need to sin a lot less. Matter of fact, let's go for sinlessness. You'll never get there. But let's try and sin as less as we can, right? As least as we can? Words mean... I speak for a living. I don't know what the word is there. Less, less and less. Lesser. Lessly. (audience laughs) Keep reading. When you're in doubt, just keep reading.

Verse 13, "And when the dragon saw that he'd been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child." OK, this is the people of God, right? Israel in particular. Christ child comes. "The woman who was given two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness." If you want to talk about outcasts, God's people are always going to feel that way. "To the place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time." I know this has eschatological specific application. But it's the principle of the whole thing of all of human life and the people of God, in particular, those after the male child has been born, after Christ has appeared.

"The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood." Satan's trying to attack the people of God, always. Verse 16. "But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river and the dragon that had poured it out from his mouth. And the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring." Right? God's people, the Church, in this case, in the current age, the people of God. And if we're part of it, if we sign up for it, if we get drawn to this Christ who was crucified, well, then you're in a war, you're in a war, "on those who keep the commandments of God, hold to the testimony of Christ. And he stood on the sand of the sea."

Here is this picture of a battle. Is the battle long? Yes. Can you say that the judgment has been judicially waged on the enemy? Yes. I no longer am subject to the enslavement of the enemy. Were you here Friday? The picture of Pharaoh enslaving the people and the weight of those bricks. Think of the idea of the freedom, the release, the redemption, the ransom that was now paid. Now I am free from that.

Now, did that mean that they laid down their arms? No. The whole point of the fury of Pharaoh was to keep chasing after the Israelites into the desert. He went after them. Talk about the flood coming after them. Here were all the chariots of Pharaoh still chasing the people of God. How would you feel dragging your eight-year-old out of Egypt? You'd go, "Oh man! The spears, the horses, all the swords of Egypt. They're still coming after us." But you've been freed. You really are. You're freed. You're heading to the Promised Land. We're





in the desert right now, and I know that's tough. And are we at war? Sure we're at war. Well, how in the world than in this whole concept of being won, right? We have the judicial judgment on the enemy. The rule of this world's been cast out. Cast out? What do you mean? Well, he no longer has jurisdiction over me, but he sure is angry and waging war against the offspring of God's people.

God fixed the real problem. And I know it all is waiting for the final fulfillment, right? I get that. But I hope that you're being drawn to Christ. That word, by the way, is the same word, if you know the book of John, at the end of the book of John, we go back to the Sea of Galilee, and it's the word that's used repeatedly of this. When the nets are thrown into the sea and the fish get in them, and then the fishermen PULL the nets back into the boat with all the fish kind of flipping around trying to get out of the net. That's the efficacious hauling and grace of God pulling these people to himself.

Christ, if he's lifted up, is going to draw ALL people to himself. All. Not "all without exception," every last individual, but "all without distinction." Even in this context we have the Greeks coming to Christ now and they're interested. We got Greeks, Scythians, barbarians, slaves, free, Jews, Gentiles, everyone of different stripes coming here to Christ. He's drawing ALL kinds of people to himself. And I hope that 2,000 years later, as I look at out at primarily Gentiles, non-Jewish people, I hope that maybe God is pulling you.

Maybe you're like Saul of Tarsus kicking against the pulling of that net. But maybe that's one reason you're stuck here in church listening to me yak at you for an hour because God is continuing to give you the message and pull you closer and get you closer so that you can get to the place of being thrown into the boat and being in this jurisdiction of Christ, the crucified Christ, and no longer the ruler of this world. That's the whole point. That's why we're here on Easter morning to celebrate the fact that judgment has been exacted on the enemy and that all of what we should fear, the enslavement to death, the fear of death, it should be gone, it should be broken.

Well, how? Back to our passage. Look at what it says here in verse 33, "He said this to show what kind of death he was going to die." The crowd said, "Well, what about the Bible? The Bible says, the Old Testament says, Christ shall remain forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is the Son of Man?" OK. He doesn't answer the question, but what is the answer to the question? The answer to the question, you can jot this down if you want, Isaiah Chapter 53 shows us the picture of a dying messiah who then lives after he dies. So all the promises of an eternal Christ are true. He's going to live forever.

The problem is as they looked at it from the Old Testament and it was very confusing because, like looking with a pair of binoculars over the horizon, they saw two different mountaintops. One was the first coming of Christ, and the second in the distance was the second coming of Christ. And all of these prophecies, if you're not careful, you don't know which is which. It kind of looks like maybe all of them are going to happen at the same time. How can that happen? Well, if you're going to choose, which passages do I want to focus on and memorize. What do I want on a plaque in the Jewish bookstore after Sabbath School is



over, I'm going to say I picked the ones about the ruling reigning victorious Christ, not the suffering servant dying on a cross and pouring out his life, even under death. I don't want to talk about that one.

So everyone focused on the positive one because that's what we like. We like the good news. And the good news is Christ is going to rule and reign over the nations and be in charge forever. "The government's going to rest on his shoulders." With the "increase and extent of his kingdom, there will be no end." But that's what we want to focus on. We don't like to look at the fact that he's going to be "marred more than any man." He's going to pour out its life like a guilt offering. He's going to be "crushed because of our iniquities." So they struggled with that. Well, here's the thing, they're separated now that we've kind of passed the first one and we're in the valley between the two comings of Christ. We now know the first one was when he came as a suffering servant and the next one he comes back as a ruling king.

And what we need to know is that what really matters for us, even in between the valley, is that we look back and see that the problem that I ultimately had, it all comes to bear on his death that allows me to think about his life and the life that I can have because of his resurrected life. That sounds really thick in terms of theology, but let's think that through. The point is in his death, I now have no fear of death as it says in First Corinthians 15, the "sting of death" is removed. How? Because Christ died and then the exclamation point after he died was, "Hey, now he's alive." Why was he alive? Because the "wages of sin is death" and he paid for sin.

And how fully did he pay for sin? The last words he says as he's on the cross, he cries out to the crowd, he uses the Greek word "Tetelestai," tetelestai, tetelestai. What does that mean? People have translated it in our Bibles "it is finished." It was used in accounting back in the ancient days, the old CPAs of the first century might say something like paid in full. The debt is paid.

Here's another word that might help. It's not the same word, but it's a related concept. It's the word "Propitiation." In Romans Chapter 3, the concept of our salvation, which leads into Chapter 4 and Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, is all about the fact that Christ has paid a penalty that we should have paid. But the death of Christ paid for that so that I can have the problem of death eradicated. I have a debt. How is it going to be paid for? By someone else paying the debt. So the debt is paid by death. And that's a death that's a grueling, horrific death. And that death means that I don't have to experience the death, the death of God's judgment on my life. Let God judge the Son and then God doesn't judge me. That's the picture.

We're fighting death with death. And the death of death comes about because God fought death with death. Does that sound like a tongue twister? Jot it down, number two, "See the Death of Death in Christ." Think that through. The death of death in Christ, which is not original to me, the Puritans wrote a great book on this, "The Death of Death in Christ," John Owen, I think, was the author of that. Christ said, "I'll die so that you don't have to die. We can kill death by me dying in your place." That was the picture of the propitiation, the satisfaction, the ransom. As Jesus said, "I came to give my life as a ransom for many."



So I need to look at the fact that he did die when they're saying, "I don't think you should die if you're the Messiah." Well, he has to die because there's no eternal life for anyone but himself if he doesn't die. He has to die taking on the penalty of their sin. Were you here Friday? You don't have to audibly answer, but, you know, smile at me, "Yeah, I was your Friday." Right? If you need some bricks, by the way, we got a lot of extra bricks leftover from the weekend. I don't think I want to pave your driveway with them because they remind you of some bad things that we do as Christians. I'm talking about Friday.

What's the transaction? My sin on his cross, my sin on his cross, my sin that should kill me, ends up killing him instead. All of my sin, my iniquities, crush him. My iniquities were crushing me, Psalm 38, but now all my sins can be transferred to his cross. That's why the Messiah had to die. They complain, "Oh, if you're the Messiah you shouldn't die." Jesus doesn't even answer that. But we can answer that and that is that the death of death required the death of Christ. Christ had to die. There was the death of death in Christ's death. You got to see the death of death in Christ. That's the picture. And how important is that? It's essential.

Matter of fact, so essential. I don't know. Let's look at it. Romans Chapter 3. We're looking at the brochure. It's important. This will save you the eternal debt of sin. You won't have to pay it. It's worth looking at Romans Chapter 3. Look it up. Find it. Put it into your phone. Verse 23, do you know, this verse? I'll bet you do, Romans 3:23. "Hmmm, I do remember that verse. I went to church as a kid. I remember they taught me that verse." Here it comes, "All have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God." All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Do you know that verse? Keep reading. "And they are justified," here they are, made right, "by his grace as a gift."

If I said someone richer than Elon's going to take all of your taxes and pay for them for the next hundred years and all the past taxes, that's going to be given back to you with interest. But here's a payment. It's a gift. "Through the redemption," it's a purchase, it's an exchange, "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward," now, here's our fancy word, "as a propitiation," as a payment. He pays this payment in Christ, by his death, "by his blood." And how do you get it? Well, I got to fill out the form and what's the form? Well he's going to tell us in the next passage in our text and in John 12, we're going have to "believe in the light," we're going to have to trust him. This is the word "faith," "pisteuo" in Greek. It's the word that's translated "faith," it's translated "believe," but it really means more than just believing facts. It means that I'm transferring my trust to him, that his cross paid for my sin.

"This was to show God's righteousness," think about that, God's righteousness, "because in his divine forbearance," he's been very patient, very tolerant, "he had passed over former sins." He didn't eradicate the masses when they sinned in every case. He was patient with them. But now he said, I'm going to pay for those sins and I'm going to have a place where God's judgment has been, I'm going to judge Christ as though all of the sins that those people of mine have done are going to be laid on him. And that is the propitiation that now "shows his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just," in other words, every sin has been paid for, "and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."



I said it Friday, if you were here. Sometimes we think, "Oh, if all my sins are on a brick, I just think they will just disappear." They can't disappear. They have to be paid for. God is a just God. That modern religion does not have the theology of the cross. They don't. It's too bloody. It's too gross. It's too weird. It makes me think that God's mad at me because I'm a sinner. All of that's true. Right? He is angry at you because you're a sinner. Matter of fact, he calls you his enemy. You're hostile toward him. But that hostility is congruent with, at the same time, it comports with his love for sinners and in his love... We're close to it. Let's go to it.

Chapter 5. I mean, we should read it. Right? It's right here in the Bible. Scrolling down, verse 6. Romans 5. "While we were still weak, at the right time," and it took place at a point of time. This is when Satan is going to be judged. He has no longer a claim on those who are going to be sons of light. "At the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for righteous person - though perhaps for a good one some would even dare to die - but God shows his love for us in that way that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, now, we've been justified by his," his death, "his blood, how much more should we be saved by him from the wrath of God?" That's huge.

Verse 10, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." He now intercedes for us. "More than that, we also rejoice in God through the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we've now received reconciliation." We're right with God. Nothing could stop that now that Christ had died on a cross. The judgment of heaven was that Satan no longer has hold on these people. You now are part of God's team, sons of light, and it was all taken care of by the death of Christ.

You expect firefighters to put out fires, right? But you know a lot of firefighters particularly the hotshots, some of them are in our church who are out there doing that elite work, when there's a wildfire, they start fires. What? Yeah, we even give them tools to start fires. They're called the drip torch and the drip torch is out there with accelerant, lighting fires. Why do the hotshot crews light fires? Well, we call them backfires. I know enough news to know that. Why? Because if I can burn this area, when the fire gets to this area, it's already burnt. And guess what? It doesn't burn.

Matter of fact, that's why on the old plains, when there was this big fire approaching, the wise farmers would go out and burn a controlled burn around their house or their barn, around their crops or around their animals, their cattle. They would burn a big circle. And now, all of a sudden, when the plains were pushing this wildfire across the landscape, the fire would burn right around them. Why? Because you can't burn where it's already been burned. And that's the point. The death of Christ is where Mike Fabarez's sins were paid for, paid in full, and the whole point of Easter is, "Hey, tadaa." The exclamation point. It was all acceptable. The wages of sin is death.

Christ died. It was an acceptable death, a propitiatory death, a death that was satisfying. God crushed him. "He was willing to crush him" that he might reconcile us and account us as



righteous, quoting Isaiah 53. That's the transaction of the cross. And without it, you got a Christ who shows up and says, I'm perfect, I'm going to lead the world. You got him leading a bunch of dead people who are going to die in their sins. Or he comes and dies and then rises and becomes a King who, after 2,000 years of drawing people to himself, comes back and says, "Well, guess what? Now we can have people who are in the kingdom forever. They can have eternal life." They can be like him in his resurrection. That's the whole point. But death has got to be dealt with. And it is dealt with. The death of death takes place in Christ's ministry, in particular his death.

By the way, I called it the Nehushtan Tax Relief of 2023. Did anybody catch that? No? Nehushtan. Sunday school grads do you know Nehushtan? Anybody? No? It's an advanced Bible trivia question, I understand. Nehushtan. It was the word, Hezekiah ended up having to deal with it, that was given to him because it's a conflation of the Hebrew words. "Well, how am I supposed to know Hebrew?" Well Nehushtan is written in our English Bibles in First Kings. Hezekiah has to deal with it because they had made an idol out of this bronze snake, which is what it means. Bronze snake. Nehushtan. It was the thing that was lifted up in the wilderness that when someone got a snake bite, they looked at it and they were healed.

What was that all about? Really weird, but here's what it was about. Jesus said, last time he said in the book of John, "When I'm lifted up, I'll draw all men to me." He said, "Just like the serpent was lifted up in the desert, so must the Son of Man has to be lifted up." What's the point? Like, "Oh, we should praise him more." No, no, no, it's about him being hoisted up on a beam, just like the snake. They made a snake. Put it up on a beam. Why? Because everyone there in Numbers was sinning and they were sinning by something that you and I can identify with, with their mouths. Just like it says in James 3, easy to sin with our mouths. They were sinning with their mouths. They were saying things they should not say. They were complaining. They were moaning and groaning. And God says, "I've had enough." And so he starts to send snakes to bite them and so they can suffer and die. "The wages of sin is death." And in this case, physical death.

And as they're dying, they go, "Oh, we blew it now. Please, please, please, Moses intercede for us. We want to be forgiven. And we also don't want the dizziness and the achiness and the sweating and dying of venomous snake bites. We don't want that either. So please take it away. And God says to Moses, go out there and construct a bronze snake and put it up on a pole, on a stick and have them look at it.

Now about how long is it going to take to make a bronze snake. Like, "go out this afternoon and make a bronze snake." It's going to take more than ten minutes, right? I mean this is going to take some time, which is weird. They're going to feel the full weight of their sickness, their venomous snake bites. They're dizzy. They're sweating. They're dying and they're over there going, "Whoop-de-do. let's make a bronze snake. Then they get it. They put it up on a pole. Here's something God was doing in that, according to the Bible, getting people used to a mediatorial role. A mediatorial role.



In other words, you have a problem with God. God is going to fix that problem by sending a mediator. That's his own Son, the second person of the Godhead. He is going to be lifted up on a cross. Which today you really haven't seen, because even all the writers do it very calmly and carefully, and they always have nice garments covering his privates. And so that's not how it was. It was gross. It was awful. It was ignoble. It was embarrassing. It was shameful. But just like that snake, which, by the way, if you want to be healed from a snake bite, you don't want to be staring at a snake, right? That's the last thing I want to look at. That's the point. A mediatorial. You want to get right with God. Here it is. In this case, you want be healed from a snake bite, look at this. And you know what you can look at? A snake. You going to look at a snake, stare at the snake. The problem is the snake.

See, and so we look at the cross. What's the problem? I deserve God's punishment. I deserve God's justice. You look at it and do what? Trust that God in his grace will forgive you. But you put your confidence and trust there. Nehushtan, that's the word for it, the bronze snake, lifted it up. Christ says, "If I'm lifted up I'm going to draw people to me." And you know what? Talk about living forever? Had to die, had to die, had to die. The Bible said, had to die. Because you can't live forever if you don't have me die in your place.

Jesus didn't answer the question, but how does it end? It ends with dude, the door's closing, the lights are going off. Matter of fact, here's how it really ends. You want my commentary on it because it's a good historical summary? This is your last chance to respond. I mean, really, that's what happens because the next day they go looking for him and they can't find him. He hid himself. So basically, I mean, let's read the text, go back to our passage here, John Chapter 12 verse 35. "So Jesus said to them, 'The light is among you for a little while longer.'" They had no idea how little the word "little" was, right? A little was the rest of this conversation.

Walk. Now. Get in line. Come, take the next step. Walk "while you have the light," I'm here, I'm here, "lest the darkness overtakes you. But the one who walks in darkness doesn't know where he's going. While you have the light, believe in the light." He's already determined and said, "I'm the light, I'm the light of the world." "That you may become sons of light." It changes your status by putting your trust in Christ. "When Christ said these things, he departed and hid himself." You can keep reading if you want, you have your Bibles open. "Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him."

I don't know what's going to take for you. But I would say this: my job on Easter as a preacher is to tell you, you got to respond. And I'm going to say this: respond today. Number three, if you're taking notes. "Don't Delay Your Response to the Truth." Don't delay your response. Do not delay your response to the truth. Don't, don't, don't.

You say, "I don't fully understand." OK, great. Let's try and at least understand it better, but here's the thing, if you're dying of a snake bite in the wilderness and you're like, "I don't really quite understand why we have to look at a bronze snake right now." I understand. There will be parts of your theology you will not have fully nussed by the time you become a Christian. But I am saying this you better throw yourself on the mercy of God if you know you've got a



sin problem. And the only way you can deal with that is to have someone else deal with it. And the one who deals with it is the eternal Son of God. Put your trust in him and do it today. Because here's the deal, the light, it's going away.

You could say it, let's say Jesus is preaching a sermon there, and he says, "Hey, you never know when your life's going to be over, you ought to respond today. You ought to trust in me." I mean, yeah, I could say that. How many times have I heard a preacher say that? "You know, you never know, your life like a vapor, here today, gone tomorrow." It ain't even that you should be concerned about. Some of you're sitting here as teenagers. "Oh, I'm sure I'll be healthy for a long time." You might be, you might be healthy. You might live to be a 114. Fantastic. Congratulations. But you know what? In the next 20 minutes, it may be the last opportunity you have, because God's going to shut the door, BAM. Because the light that you have right now is as clear as the light is ever going to be for you and your rejection of it is going to be the end of it. God's never going to give you another opportunity. Could be, I don't know. But you better respond.

You better not delay your response to the truth unless you think I'm absolutely wacko and crazy and all this that I'm saying is not true, is not true, it's not true. I think I'm going to get to heaven. I'm going to be just fine and I'm going to kind of make it up as I go. Really? I don't know. All the pastors are going to a pastors' conference after this weekend. Really ill-timed planning for pastors to come. The biggest one in the country. We're going to get on planes and we're going to go. If we all show up there and go, well, we should just get there. Right? We ought to go.

And at the airport they say, "Well, where's your ticket?" "Well, I don't have a ticket. I don't want to mess with all that." Well, what do you mean? You can't just make this up as you go? You can't even go to the Orange County Airport and expect to make your own rules to get somewhere across the country. And you think you're going to figure this out on your own? Christ has said, "Here's the answer. I'm the answer. Trust in me." And you know what that means? You're going to be identified as a son of life. You are going to be identified as a son of God. You're going to be identified as a Jesus freak. You're going to be identified as the narrow-minded, Bible-thumping, fundamentalist Christian. Well, I don't want to be understood as that. Well, then sorry.

You're going have to identify with the Christ who saved you. You need to not be ashamed of that. I get it, the world thinks this is nuts, and also the world doesn't think they have a sin problem. I don't know. Do you think they have a sin problem? I think you think they do. And I think if you're honest, you're a part of that problem, too. And the sin in your life should be evidence that you have a sin problem that needs to be dealt with. They reject Christ, they reject the Christ of the Bible because they don't even think they have a problem that needs to be dealt with. They're going to figure it out. Oprah is going to figure it out as she goes, right?

And I'm just telling you this. Good luck with that. You can't even figure out the airport on your own. You're going to submit to everyone there behind the counter and the guys with the blue uniforms telling you what you can and can't take through into the terminal. I'm just telling you,



you can't do it without clarity from Christ, and Christ has made it very clear. You've got a sin problem, Christ has provided the answer. You need to put your trust in him. That needs to happen today. You need to become a Christian today. You need to become a Christian today. "Well, I think I am a Christian." Are you sure that you are a Christian? Really? Are you sure?

Some say, "Well, what about the Buddhist? What about the Buddhist?" Well we ought to go share with the Buddhist too. Right? Because "There's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Muhammad didn't do it. He's dead, right? You understand that. Confucius - dead, right? You understand ALL of the world religions are based on dead leaders. The only one that provides the hope of eternal life is a risen Christ. And it's because he dealt with the sin problem.

I don't know. I really don't know what to say, other than you got to do this and you need to be sure. You need to make that decision. It's the decision that God draws you and you just need to settle this issue. You can't make this up. You can't figure it out. You've got to respond to objective external truth and say, "I need that truth to be the governing decision-making instruction of my life," right? The light's going to expose it, now you take the step, you walk while you have the light. It could be the last opportunity you have, so I'm appealing to you to do that.

"Are you going to make me sign up for something?" I'm not going to make you sign up for anything, right? You're going to sign up to what you just heard. Do business with God. Deal with it. Deal with this today. It's way more important than any other problem you have. It's the biggest problem of all and it's been solved. Christ is only waiting in the course of human history until he gets all the people he wants to respond to respond, and maybe it's your opportunity today to respond so that we can get on with the next life. The Kingdom. Christ can come back. He's going to be dispatched the minute the last convert in the church age comes to faith in Christ and wouldn't it be great if it were you, right? We'll give you a medal, a gold star, a brownie. We'll give you something for that to be the last one in this age. How good it would be if it were someone here in our midst today.

Let me pray for you. God, we want people to respond rightly to the truth of Christ. It's been governing people's decisions, I mean, so many in church history who we read about skeptical, resistant, rebellious, but they get stuck just like Paul got stuck on that road to Damascus and say, "I have nowhere else to turn. This is the truth that needs to be responded to. It needs my whole heart, my life, my resolve." As Paul would later write to the Romans a wholehearted commitment to the teaching, that body of truth, the corpus of information that God has provided to us. And Christ made it so clear that he is the one who's defeated and solved and fixed our problem by judging the ruler of this world who had such sway over so many things.

And God, we want to step out from the crowd. I know we're going to invoke the wrath of a sinful culture, that spirit that's now at work in the sons of disobedience in which everyone seems to be walking in. God, we want to step out from that and be counted with you. I pray you'd help us to do that even now, some in our midst. Maybe today's the day for them.





In Jesus name. Amen