

January 22, 2023

The story of REALITY: JESUS 3-Face to Face with THE SERVANT SAVIOR

Leighton Ford, evangelist and brother-in-law of Billy Graham, once met the former boxing champion Muhammad Ali at a hotel in Sydney, Australia.

Ford listened as Ali regaled a group of admiring onlookers before Ford introduced himself as "Billy Graham's brother-in-law."

Ali's face lit up as he said, "Oh Billy! Billy! I love Billy! I went up and saw him at the house at Montreat and he signed a book for me."

Ford explained what happened next: We got into a very interesting conversation. He was not only very articulate, he was also a very bright man. Of course earlier in his life Ali had become a Muslim, but he told me and the onlookers, "You know I have traveled all over the world. And I have seen all these different religions. It seems to me that they all have the same thing. It's kind of like you have a river, and you have a lake, and you have a pond, and you have a stream. But they all have water in them, so they are all the same, aren't they?"

Leighton Ford said, "Muhammad that is very interesting. But suppose you have all of them and suppose they are all polluted. Then you would need a purifier, wouldn't you? You see that's who Jesus is. Jesus is the purifier."

And Ali thought about that for a minute and he said, "That's good. I had never thought about it quite like that. Jesus is the purifier."

...Leighton Ford said, "Did you know that in the Bible Jesus is called the Second Adam?"

And Ali said, "I didn't know that."

Ford said, "Yes, you see there was the first Adam that God made in the first creation. Then the second Adam was Jesus, coming as representative of a new creation, in whom everyone can become new." And he said, "I've got to think about that."

How much he thought about Jesus the Purifier, who came as the second Adam, we don't know, but today we are going to think about that.

I. King Jesus is the PURIFIER

The Old Testament prophecies held mysteries that were not answered until Jesus came. The easiest way to get at some of their unanswered questions is to hear one of them from an Ethiopian eunuch, an official, who was returning from Jerusalem having gone there to worship. While in his chariot returning to Ethiopia, he was reading from an Isaiah scroll. **You might say he was texting and scrolling while driving!!**

Don't try this on your own. I suspect he either had a driver, because he was sitting while reading, or he had well trained horses on a narrow empty road.

Anyway, ... he was reading Isaiah 53. This particular set of prophecies about a “suffering servant” was a puzzling to him.

Acts 8:32–35 (NIV) This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” ³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

Isaiah 53 has been called the Mt Everest of prophecy about Jesus. There is no other chapter in the Old Testament that more clearly or more specifically tells of the redemptive work of Jesus. But nobody knew this was talking about the Messiah until Jesus. Jews before Jesus coming, never connected the fact that the stream of prophecies about the suffering servant were talking about the same person as the stream of prophecies about the Glorious Christ.

But Jesus knew this. Here is just one example of where he interprets the “Suffering servant” passages to be about himself.

Matthew 20:25–28 (NIV) Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

This is precisely what is taught regarding the suffering servant of Isaiah.

If you want to read these “suffering servant” prophecies, all 4 of the passages are referenced in question 2 of the “Talk it Over”.

I. King Jesus is the PURIFIER

II. King Jesus came to GIVE his LIFE as a RANSOM for us

The first person to interpret Isaiah 53 correctly was Jesus. Let’s dig a little bit deeper into Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:3–6 (NIV) He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. ⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all!

On the surface, this sounds ghastly if you do not understand God, as the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit. Some atheists have attempted to undermine Christianity by arguing that we worship an abhorrent God. They argue that this is horrific child abuse. Who does this!? Who gives his son to die on the cross so that others can be saved?

Timothy Keller, in his book *Forgive* does a good job undermining their argument. What they misunderstand is the very nature of God as Trinity.

Christians do not believe that there are three gods. Rather there is one God who exists in three persons--but all the fullness of the divine being resides in each. The Father is not the Son, but the Father and the Spirit are in the Son ...therefore it is wildly inaccurate to say that on the cross the Father abused the Son...

The Father would be abusing the Son [on the cross] ... if Christ were a third party, But he isn't... [there are only two parties at the cross] the God who was wronged and humanity who wronged God who is Father, Son, and Spirit.

I. King Jesus is the PURIFIER

II. King Jesus came to GIVE his LIFE as a RANSOM for us

III. King Jesus is the SUFFERING SERVANT SAVIOR

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NIV) ...God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ...

How was God reconciling the world to himself in Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:20–21 (NIV) ...We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

King Jesus is our PURIFIER through the purifying victory of Jesus. An exchange is taking place in this RANSOM.

Guilt is being exchanged for goodness. What Christ received from us brought him death. What we receive from him brings us life. Jesus invites us to exchange our guilt for his goodness.

Philip explained all of this to the Ethiopian official.

Acts 8:36 (NIV) As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"

- **You don't have to be a theologian or understand all the prophecies to experience this.** You just have to admit you need this exchange and ask for it trusting that Jesus can do what he said he will do for you.
 - Trust the same one who said he will rise from the dead, and did! God vindicated Jesus' claims.

- You don't have to fully understand everything about electricity to flip the light switch in the up position. Do so, and the lights come on!
- **Neither do you have to be a theologian or understand all the prophecies to SERVE others!** Just turn to the light switch.

Gordon MacDonald shares the following story: At an AA meeting one morning Kathy—I guessed her age at 35—joined us for the first time. One look at her face caused me to conclude that she must have been Hollywood-beautiful at 21. Now her face was swollen, her eyes red, her teeth rotting. Her hair looked unwashed, uncombed for who knows how long.

"I've been in five states in the past month," she said. "I've slept under bridges on several nights. Been arrested. Raped. Robbed (now weeping). I don't know what to do. I ... (sob) don't ... want ... (sob) to ... be ... homeless ... any more. But (sob) I can't stop drinking (sob). I can't stop (sob). I can't ... "

Next to Kathy was a rather large woman, Marilyn, sober for more than a dozen years. She reached with both arms toward Kathy and pulled into her caring embrace, and spoke quietly into Kathy's ear, "Honey, you're going to be OK. You're with us now. We can deal with this together. All you have to do is keep coming. Hear me? Keep on coming." And then Marilyn kissed the top of Kathy's head.

Gordon MacDonald, "My Small Group, Anonymous," Leadership Journal (Winter 2014)

Next Step: Who might you serve this week? How do you hope to serve them? **Saved People Serve People**

Next week solves another mystery: *How is it possible that "a man" made others believe he was God?* in "The Story of Reality JESUS: Face to face with God!"

Face to Face with the Servant Savior

SMALL TALK

1. When it comes to drinking water, is it tap water, purified water, or other? Why? Do you have a favorite?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Isaiah 52:13-53:12.** [This is the 4th “Servant song” in Isaiah (see 42:1-7; 49:1-13; 50:4-9).] If you grew up next door to the “Servant” how would you have described him (53:2-3)?
3. If all you knew about the servant’s adult life was summed up in 53:7-9, what would you have assumed must have happened to him?
4. What was the purpose of the Servant’s suffering? (53:4-6)
5. How do you account for the paradox between his death (53:9) and his seeing the “light of life” (53:11)?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. How does this prophecy bring reassurance to you of God’s love and forgiveness?
7. How does being so loved give you courage to serve others?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

8. Who might you serve this week? How do you hope to serve them?