

A LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH

VIDEO TWO

Tucked away in an Old Testament poem, we read these words:

Love is as strong as death,
its jealousy unyielding as the grave.
It burns like blazing fire,
like a mighty flame.

When all is said and done – and death has done everything it can do – even then, says the poet, love remains. Love is like a fire that water simply cannot quench.

It's not surprising that this verse is a popular choice for weddings – yet it is also a summary of Christianity itself. For while it says something about the power of human love, it is ultimately about the love of God.

True love is 'jealous', says the poet. We tend to think of jealousy as a negative thing, but it can refer to the relentless passion for something that's rightly yours.

Jealous love for someone, then, is as unwavering as the grave.

When someone is put into a grave, the grave doesn't give them back again. Jealous love is like that, says the poet. Jealous love says: you're mine, forever.

This is why, in the Bible, only God is said to have truly jealous love. Only God's love is undivided, undistracted, totally fixated on those he loves.

Only God's love refuses to give up those he embraces as his own.

The whole Bible can be seen as an account of how nothing can stand in the way of the flame of God's love. Everything – literally everything – is fuel for this fire. Everything that seems to oppose God's love only makes it burn brighter, whiter, hotter.

This is what we remember at Eastertime.

Jesus is the flame of God, revealing God in human time and space. As we watch Jesus relate to others, we see the jealous love of God burning even for those normally considered unlovable.

As Jesus dies, it looks as though death is stronger than love. But, as Jesus rises from the grave, death is overturned, swallowed up in victory.

The flame of God's love overpowers even the waters of the grave.

For Christians, then, Jesus' death and resurrection are *the* historical demonstrations of the power of God's jealous love, as unyielding as the grave.

Jesus' love for us led him to die, in our place, in our shoes, for our forgiveness.

Then, as he rises, we see that not even death can diminish his love: his grip on us is even tighter than the grave. The historical realities of Jesus' empty tomb and his post-resurrection appearances convinced his early disciples that God's love for us will really endure, even beyond death.

It isn't just wishful thinking. If we will entrust ourselves to Jesus, there really is love for us on the other side. Death is not the end.

This conviction led the Bible writer Paul to write these confident words to Christians in Rome – words you're about to discuss together:

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Surely here is a love stronger than death – a love you're invited to know today.