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SUFFERING SAVIOR CHAPTER

ISAIAH 53:1-12

Isaiah 53 is HIStory – His Story - the story of the Messiah’s sufferings pre-written. It is prophecy about the purpose of Messiah’s coming into the world.

His coming had been preceded by hundreds of years of prophecies. Those prophecies declared where and how He would be born, how He would live, and how He would die. There are at least 300 of these prophecies. And one of the most powerful of these prophetic passages of Scripture is chapter Isaiah 53. Isaiah is often called the “Messianic” prophet because so much of his book was dedicated to giving detailed information about the coming Messiah.

David Baron wrote a Christian classic book on Isaiah 53 titled *Servant of Jehovah*. In it he said, “Isaiah 53 is the most central and the loftiest thing that Old Testament prophecy has ever achieved. Isaiah 53 has supplied more texts for the Gospel preacher than any other portion of the Old Testament.” (David Baron, 1857-1926, was a Jewish convert to Christianity. The author of numerous books and periodicals, he was a leader in the Messianic Jewish and Hebrew Christian movements in Europe.)

What John chapter 3 is to the Gospel of John, Isaiah chapter 53 is to the book of Isaiah. In fact, the book of Isaiah has been called the Gospel of Isaiah. Martin Luther said that every Christian ought to be able to repeat it by heart.

As we come to consider the verses before us, we must go back to chapter 52 to begin. Actually, the theme of Isaiah 53 begins in chapter 52. Some have suggested that Isaiah chapter 53 should have begun with Isaiah 52:13 which is as follows:

“See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness— so will many nations be amazed at him and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.” (Isaiah 52:13-15)

The above verses are considered to be Isaiah’s preface to chapter 53. However, for the purposes of this study we will concentrate initially upon Isaiah 53 and come back to chapter 52 later. Consider:

THE MESSIAH’S INTRODUCTION

“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground.” (vs.1-2)

The Unbelief Concerning The Messiah.

Isaiah poses a question at the beginning: *“Who has believed our report?”* There were few in Isaiah’s day who believed what he had been reporting vocally and now was writing concerning the Messiah. Later, John reported that *“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”* (John 1:10-11) In all those intervening years between Isaiah and John, the unbelief of Israel continued. When Christ was born few expected Him to appear.

The Unique Entrance of The Messiah.

Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would arise as a *“tender plant out of dry ground.”* The statement speaks of the earthly beginnings of the Lord Jesus. Dare we suggest that the Virgin Birth of our Savior was an unlikely beginning from an unexpected source?

How could such a thing be? Do not overlook the following statement: *“To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”* The words, *“The arm of the Lord”* occurs several times in Scripture. Isaiah 62:8 is one example: *“The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength.”* The phrase *“the arm of the Lord”* is an emblem of *“the power of the Lord.”* The power of the Lord will accomplish the bringing of the Messiah into the world. Recall what the angel said to Mary: *“And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”* (Luke 1:35)

The introduction of the Messiah by Isaiah is not like a modern-day press release of a celebrity is it? The world was indifferent to the birth of the babe who was born in obscurity, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in an obscure village, where he worked in a carpenter’s shop until he was thirty. *“A root out of dry ground.”*

THE MESSIAH’S REJECTION

“He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” (vs.2b-3)

Look at how vividly this was fulfilled: *“And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.”* (Matthew 27:39-44)

Years ago a man who had been crippled earlier in life was cruelly mocked and nicknamed, "Old Rattle Bones" by a group of boys on the street. The leader of the group of ruffians was Freddie and he became quite worried one day when he saw the man whom he called "Old

Rattle Bones" headed to his house. Because his friends were with him the boy tried to hide his anxiety and called out, "Old Rattle Bones, see if I care if you talk to my mother." The man said, "You wouldn't call me names like that if you knew what caused my condition."

When he arrived at Freddie's house the boy's mother welcomed him in and she called for her son, Freddie, to come in to the house as well. The man said, "I came to tell you why I am crippled. You see years ago when you were just a baby, your nurse took you out in your carriage for a ride near the river. When she let go of the carriage handle for a moment, it suddenly began to careen down the hill. Before she could catch up with it the buggy plunged into the river. I jumped into the river and after a difficult struggle brought you safely to shore, but I left before anyone could ask my name. The water that day was frigid, and it aggravated my rheumatic condition. Now, 10 years later, I can scarcely hobble along." Freddie hung his head and began to cry. He recovered and said, "Thank you for saving me. And forgive me for calling you Old Rattle Bones. I didn't know who you were!"

The people of Jesus' day did not know who our Savior was and they despised and rejected Him even though He gave His life to save them from a far worse fate than physical death. He died to save us all from spiritual death.

Hallelujah, What A Savior!

"Man of sorrows! What a name
For the son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned he stood –
Sealed my pardon with his blood:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!"

THE MESSIAH'S CRUCIFIXION

This chapter is an unanswerable proof of the inspiration of the Bible and the divinity of Christ. Its predictions are so specific that no mere man could possibly have written them, nor fulfilled them.

Eighteen different words are used to describe the sufferings of the Servant of Jehovah, our Savior. Here is a list of the word: despised, rejected, sorrows, stricken, afflicted, smitten, wounded, bruised, chastisement, stripes, oppressed, slaughter, prison, judgment, cut off, death, poured out, visage marred.

The 12 verses of Isaiah 53 contain more sorrow, pain, suffering, anguish, travail, grief rejection, oppression and affliction than any other passage of similar length in the Bible. Franz Delitzsch, the German theologian said, "The whole passage looks as if it might have been written beneath the cross on Golgotha."

As the prophet said, *“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”*

The Lord Jesus actually suffered every type of flesh wound known to medical science. Let us briefly consider each type of wound that He suffered for us:

The Contusion Wound.

A contusion wound is produced by being struck with a blunt instrument or hand.

Mathew 26:67-68 says, *“Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?”*

John 18:22 – *“One of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand.....”*

Matthew 27:30 – *“They took the reed and struck Him on the head.”*

The Laceration Wound.

A laceration is produced by a tearing instrument. Lacerations in Jesus suffering were produced by scourging or whipping. The scourge was made of thongs each tipped with bone or metal. This was fulfilled as recoded in:

Matthew 27:26 – *“Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.”*

John 19:1 - *“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.”*

The Penetration Wound.

A penetration wound is produced by a sharp pointed instrument. The crown of thorns produced this kind of wound upon the head of Jesus.

Matthew 27:29 - *“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head...”*

John 19:2 - *“And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe”*

The Perforation Wound.

The perforation wound is similar to the penetration wound however, more severe. The perforation wound is produced by a piercing instrument. Perforating comes from a Latin word ‘to pierce through.’

Psalm 22:16 – *“The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”* Matthew 27:25 states, *“Then they crucified Him.”* Crucifixion was the nailing of the hands and feet to a cross. The nails were driven into Jesus’ hands and feet. They were driven between the bones, separating, perforating the flesh.

The Incision Wound.

An incision is a deep cut produced by a sharp-edged instrument.

John 19:34 - *“One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.”*

This wound was the last one upon the body of Jesus and was inflicted by the Roman soldier to make certain that whatever life was present would be ended. This wound was quite large, for Jesus said to Thomas after His resurrection and upon His appearance in the Upper Room, *“Reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”* (John 20:27)

All of this dreadful punishment was meted out to One who was innocent, perfectly sinless and supremely holy. The words of Isaiah explain it like this, *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.”* Christ became a curse for us to remove the curse from us.

“Wounded for me, wounded for me,
There on the cross he was wounded for me;
Gone my transgressions, and now I am free,
All because Jesus was wounded for me.”

Attention, please! It was not the suffering of Christ that saves us! It was his death. He could have suffered and lived, but could not have saved. He suffered and bled and died and He died a bleeding death. It is the slain Lamb of God who saves us!

When Charles Spurgeon lay on his deathbed, he testified to a friend, "My theology now is found in four little words: "Jesus died for me. I don't say this is all I would preach if I were to be raised up again, but it is more than enough for me to die upon."

In the famous painting of the crucifixion by Rembrandt, attention is drawn first to the dying Savior. Then, as you notice the crowd gathered around that scene at Calvary, you are impressed by the various attitudes and actions of the people involved in putting the Son of God to death. Finally your eyes drift to the edge of the picture and catch sight of a lone figure almost hidden in the shadows. This figure is the artist himself, for Rembrandt realized that his sins had helped nail Jesus to the cross!

Let us say in worship and adoration, like Thomas, *“My Lord and My God!”* (John 20:28)

THE MESSIAH'S EXALTATION

We saw at the beginning that Isaiah began his description of the Suffering Savior back in chapter 52:13. He said, *“... he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.”* (Isaiah 52:13) This explicit prophecy, that the Suffering Messiah would be *“raised and lifted up and highly exalted,”* predicts His resurrection. No resurrection, no exaltation.

Isaiah 53 concludes in part as follows: *“Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause*

him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong...." (Isaiah 53:10-12)

John Piper comments: "In verse 10, after saying that the Servant gives himself as a guilt offering, Isaiah says, "He will see his offspring, he will prolong his days." This surely means that after he dies as an offering for sin, he lives again with "length of days." The same way at the beginning of verse 11 after the anguish of his soul, Isaiah says, "He will see it and be satisfied." He does not go out of existence, or enter into the place of the dead in misery. He is alive to see and be satisfied with what his death has wrought. He will be raised. Again in verse 12, after saying at the end of verse 11 that he bears the iniquities of others, Isaiah then says in verse 12, "Therefore, I will allot him a portion with the great." He has been a faithful sin-bearer in death; therefore he will be among the great in life."

The witness of the New Testament declares His resurrection and subsequent exaltation: *"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:8-11)

He has been exalted by His Father who raised Him from the dead, gave Him glory, placed Him at His own right hand, gave Him all power in heaven and in earth and committed all judgment into His hands.

Conclusion

When Isaiah talks about the suffering, the sorrow, and the satisfaction for sin, it is all "*he*," and "*him*" because He, Jesus Christ, did everything! However, when Isaiah talks about the benefits of the Savior's sufferings, it is "*we*" and "*our*." We get all the benefits of God's free grace for Jesus came to pay a debt He did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay! Yes, God has done everything possible for our salvation. *"He spared not His own Son for us."*

What does that sacrifice mean to you? Have you believed on Him whom the Father sent? Have you accepted by faith that work of redemption made possible through Christ's sacrifice and the shedding of His blood? His judgment was ours. He was our substitute. Trust the Savior today.

In Acts 8 is the story of a man who trusted Christ as his Savior. The man was the treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia who had been to Jerusalem and was riding home in his chariot. An angel told the evangelist Philip to go talk with this man. Philip approached the chariot and overheard the man reading from the book of Isaiah – from Isaiah chapter 53!

The treasurer invited Philip to ride in the chariot with him. When he read the following, *"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not*

open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth," the treasurer asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" So starting with that Scripture, Philip began to tell the man about Jesus.

The treasurer was so moved by what he heard that "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the treasurer said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?'" (Acts 8:36) The message about Jesus was so powerful that this man embraced Christ as his Savior. He wanted to be baptized right then and there as evidence of his faith in the Savior who suffered for him. What about you? Have you made that decision?

Dr. Walter L. Wilson, of Kansas City, MO, told of a meeting where a woman approached him after the service. She explained that she wanted to become a Christian but she couldn't understand how God could forgive her and accept her. At that point, he asked her if she knew any Bible verses. She responded "Oh yes, I know one." And she quoted John 3:16 as follows: "For God so loved the world that he gave His only *forgotten* son."

Dr. Wilson said that He was a little taken back by her mangling of John 3:16, but then it occurred to him how to use the misquoted verse. He said, "Do you know why God forgot His son?" "No," she replied. "He forgot His son because He wanted to remember you." That's the message of Isaiah 53.

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