

THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOK OF ISAIAH
THE FIFTH GOSPEL & ISAIAH FIFTH EVANGELIST

by **David Lee Burris**



Now the Scripture that he was reading was this:

**“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth.**

³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

- Isaiah 53:7

Introduction: Author or Authors

History And The Isaiah Theories

Modern higher critics look upon the book of Isaiah in a quite different manner than do most of us. They do not believe that Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote the 66 chapters that bear his name. Instead, they believe that Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote only the greater part of the first 39 chapters of the book. Then some of the higher critics believe that another great unknown prophet wrote chapters 60-66. Others of the higher critics dissect the book even more. They believe that "Second Isaiah" wrote only chapters 40-55, and a "Trito-Isaiah" or Third Isaiah wrote the remainder of the book. The higher critics maintain that the book of Isaiah took its present form in the first century B.C. when some unknown redactor, with the different parts of the book in hand, assimilated them into the book as it now is. We mentioned that there are very few brethren in the church who hold this view at present. However, there have been a very few preaching brethren who have accepted the "Deutero-Isaiah theory" about the book.

Reason for Critic's Position

When men take an unorthodox position there must be some reason for their doing so. And the critics' view on Isaiah is not all exception. They have reasons for accepting their view.

The main reason for the critic's position on late date theories and many unknown authors for the books of the Old Testament is because of his commitment to purely rationalistic explanations of all that happens and of all that there is (including the Bible). His reason for accepting the "deutero-Isaiah" theories and other similar higher critical theories is that he is a rank materialist. He must rule out the supernatural. He therefore under-takes to explain the origin of the Bible by human ability and accomplishment alone. To show that this is not a misrepresentation of the critic, we quote Prof. North of the University of North Wales in his book, *The Suffering Servant in the Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study*, pg. 207ff.

"The fundamental objection to the traditional Messianic interpretation is it is wedded to a too mechanical doctrine of inspiration. This seems to put it out as unworthy of serious consideration. The Prophet is a mere amanuensis, and what he writes has no relevance to the circumstances of his own time. Moreover, if this implies that he 'sees' in advance One who was not to come for another five or six centuries (he means if the prophet foretells the coming of the Christ as in chs. 7, 9, 11, 53 etc.), it raises the difficult philosophical problem whether there can be an actual prevision of history."

Prof. North further says that even though one must admit that the future was foretold and that Christ is pictured several hundred years before his coming, or if Cyrus is named a century and a half before his birth, one still isn't to conclude, that a miraculous prophecy has occurred. For he says there have been many *mythological previsions of history*. Following is his exact statement.

"Webb is cautious as to 'whether the future can ever be foreseen,' but that does not alter the fact that many myths do relate to the future: the Phaedrus Myth, for example, and Dante's *Divina Commedia*; and if Plato had developed Glaucon's prophecy of the fate of the just man, we might have had another myth strikingly similar to Isaiah 53."

Prof. North says if Isaiah is "inspired" at all, he is "inspired" only in the sense as was Plato. North's conclusion is: "If there was any anticipation of Calvary in the Old Testament - as, on any showing, there is in Isaiah liii - it is difficult to see what form it could take except one that's analogous to Platonic myth."

From these statements we see that these liberal writers deny the possibility of prophecy at all, and Millar Burrows says that there is a false implication in the New Testament. For it takes statements from the Old Testament and makes them appear as they were actually predicting events in Christ's life, when the Old Testament writers, according to Burrows, had no intention of fore-shadowing Christ's life.

We see from these quotations why the liberals deny the unity of Isaiah. I doubt that the few brethren who have denied the unity of Isaiah would admit that they accept the deutero-Isaiah theory for the same reasons as do Professors North and Burrows.

Historical Arguments For the Unity of Isaiah

We are going to present two types of evidence to show why we believe Isaiah the son of Amoz to be the author of the entire book that bears his name. The first evidence is of the type called "external"; and is not the stronger of the two types of evidence we shall present.

We now offer some circumstantial evidence that is not contained in the Bible, but which supports and verifies the evidence we find in the Bible.

The Unanimity of History's Testimony -- G.A. Smith well expressed the argument for unity of Isaiah from tradition, although he sought to refute the argument. He said:

"Till the end of the last century, it was almost universally accepted tradition, and even still is an opinion retained by some, that Isaiah was carried forward by the Spirit, out of his own age to the standpoint of one hundred and fifty years later; that he was inspired to utter the warning and comfort required by a generation of Jews so very different from his own, and was even enabled to hail by name the redeemer, Cyrus."

He simply declares that until relatively recently, no one ever thought of denying that Isaiah wrote the entire book. Though history is not infallible, yet it may be seen that the weight of scholarship throughout the years has favored the unity of Isaiah.

Josephus - The second argument for the unity of Isaiah is also from the historical field, and might easily have been included in the first argument. Jewish historian, Josephus, saw in the erection of a temple and an altar in Egypt by the high priest, Onias, fulfillment of "an ancient prediction made by (a prophet) whose name was Isaiah" (apparently referring to Isaiah 19:19-25) "about 600 years before." He also referred directly to the Cyrus prophecy of Isaiah 44, 45 and said that this prophecy belonged to Isaiah. He also stated that these prophecies were uttered "one hundred and forty years" before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple. These declarations from Josephus are important for two reasons. First, they form a part of the universal tradition for twenty-five centuries, as stated by Davidson and Smith, of believing, that the entirety of the book of Isaiah was written by him. Secondly, these statements are important, for Josephus then tells us that these prophecies were made "600 years before," and "one hundred and forty years" (and more) before their fulfillment took place.

These historical statements show us that at this time men thought a prophet might deal with a then non-existent situation, and didn't necessarily constrain himself to deal only with the present historical situation, as the modern liberal writers say he must do. These statements further show that Josephus considered the prophecies of many of the writers to have to do with the future, and many with even the remote future.

The Dead Sea Scrolls - To modern archaeological research we go for our third argument for the unity of Isaiah. In the spring of 1948 a Syrian Orthodox priest named Sowmy revealed that he had acquired five ancient manuscripts from a group of Arabs. Sowmy called John Trever at the Jerusalem American School of Oriental Research. Trever made many photographs of the manuscripts, one of which proved to be a copy of the entire book of Isaiah. The Old Testament scholar, W. F. Albright, and Millar Burrows of Yale, also examined the manuscript, and by comparison with other writings of known date, the approximate date was determined. In the same cave in which manuscripts (the first of the celebrated Dead Sea Scrolls) were found, there was also found pottery of late Hellenic origin. So, the date was established as the first half of the second century B.C. by some, and by others as 125-100 B.C. This manuscript of Isaiah was a thousand years older than any Hebrew manuscript of the book of Isaiah then existing. Some thought this newly found scroll might properly recognize and differentiate the work of Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and the Trito-Isaiah. But not so. In the Hebrew language writing begins on the right-hand page first, and then continues on the left-hand page, reading from right to left, the exact opposite of the way we do in the reading of English. With this fact in mind, note this: In the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah, chapter 40 (the supposed beginning of Deutero-Isaiah's work) begins bottom line of the right-hand page, and then continues on the left-hand page.

Would a copyist begin a new book such as (Deutero-Isaiah's prophecy) on the bottom line of a page, with no indication that he was beginning a new book? Certainly not!

This ancient manuscript was probably copied in the first half of the second century B.C., the very time that the Trito-Isaiahists and all those who hold to the redactor composition theory, give for the completion of the book.

Yet at this time, the entire book was thought to be the writing of one prophet, and not a compilation of many prophet's writings. It was all written on one manuscript, and even the page was completed with a part of the 40th chapter, which all liberal higher critics say had a different author.

We see that history at every point is against the critic, and favors the unity of Isaiah. — Cecil Willis, *Truth Magazine*

Internal Evidences For The Unity of Isaiah

We will now present another higher type evidence for the unity of the book. This second type we call "internal" evidence, because it comes from within the Bible itself.

The Heading of the Book

The most obvious way to ascertain the authorship of any Biblical book is from the Bible itself. In Isaiah 1:1 we find the statement that this book is the "vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz." This verse and others that state the same fact indicate that Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote the book.

The higher critics state that this fact is not adequate, since each separate prophecy is not said to have been made by Isaiah the son of Amoz. Many other books of the Bible state their author at the beginning of the book, and then do so nowhere else in the book. If the heading of Isaiah 1:1 is not to be applied to the entire book, then the inspired prophet left us with a false impression, since he in no other place indicates that someone else was the writer of a part of the book.

G.A. Smith says that those of us who maintain the Isaian authorship are obligated to show where each individual prophecy is claimed for Isaiah. But if the whole book is claimed for him, as is the case in Isaiah 1:1, then it would be but needless tautology to separate each prophecy with the phrase that it was spoken by "Isaiah the son of Amoz."

So, the first evidence is the book of Isaiah itself. It declares the prophecies were spoken by Isaiah the son of Amoz.

The Style of Writing

Since the style of writing is also claimed by the liberals as one of the reasons why they reject the unity of Isaiah, we should not let the issue be settled by the passing of human judgment alone upon style of writing. We do not depend solely upon the style of writing. But I think that the unity of Isaiah is indicated by the style of writing in what the liberals consider to be the two sections of the book (chs. 1-39 and chs. 40-66). For example, Isaiah uses the expression, "*the Holy One of Israel,*" more than all the other writers combined. This expression is found thirty-one times in the entire Bible. Twenty-five of these times it occurs in Isaiah's writings. The, striking point is that twelve of these times it is found in chs. 1-39, and thirteen times it occurs in chs. 40-66. This fact alone should be some indication to us that the same writer wrote all sixty-six chapters of Isaiah.

The critic's division and dating of the book make the arguments of the prophet for the divinity of God appear foolish. To show the argument of Isaiah for the divinity of God more clearly we quote from Isaiah 41:22, 24; 42:9; and 44:7, 8, and in that order:

"Let them bring them forth, and declare unto us what shall happen: declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things to come. Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together."

"Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."

"And the things that are coming, and that shall come to pass, let them declare. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have I not declared unto thee of old, and showed it? and ye are my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no Rock; I know not any."

In these passages God, through the prophet, repelled those who worshiped idols by challenging them to have their gods foretell the future. But suppose, as the critics allege, the statements God presented as prophecy were actually only history, what would be the weight of His challenge to the idols? It would have no force at all. It requires no miracle to write history. If a God should demonstrate His power by prophecy, but Jehovah didn't prophecy, (which He could not have done if His so-called prophecies were history), then the conclusion would be that Jehovah wasn't God, but only a god. One stands on precarious foundations who so obliterates arguments for the divinity of Jehovah by his modernistic theories.

The New Testament Use of Isaiah

For our final and most conclusive argument we now notice the use of Isaiah's prophecies in the New Testament. Please notice that when the New Testament writers quote from both sections of Isaiah (chs. 1-39 and 40-66), as the book is divided by the liberals, they ascribe the writing to Isaiah, and not some great unknown prophet of the exile period.

Isaiah is quoted by name in the New Testament nearly twenty times, which is more than all of the remaining writing prophets combined. Oswald T. Allis states this argument very concisely in the following paragraph:

"Furthermore, in books where he is so quoted most frequently, citations are made from both parts of the book. Matthew quotes Isaiah by name six times, three times from the first part and three times from the second. Paul in Romans quotes Isaiah five times by name, and from both parts of the book. John, while quoting less frequently, cites 53:1 and 6:10 in consecutive verses as 'Isaiah' (John 12:38). Such evidences indicate with sufficient clearness that none of the New Testament writers 'dreamt' that the name of Isaiah was of doubtful or ambiguous meaning. Such facts as these should carry great weight with every Christian who values the testimony of the New Testament." *The Unity of Isaiah*, pp. 42, 43.

While the critics cannot fail to see the logical implications of these New Testament passages, yet they are not willing to admit them. G.A. Smith seeks to explain away this New Testament argument by asserting (1) that none of these New Testament citations are made "by our Lord Himself, (2) that none of them is given in answer to the question, "Did Isaiah write chs. 40-66 of the O. T. book called by his name?," (3) that the, Isaianic authorship is not involved in the argument.

These arguments show how hard pressed the critic is, and the extremes to which he is willing to go in an effort to justify his position. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit would not the statements of the apostles Paul and John be just as authoritative as one actually written by Christ Himself? If Isaiah was not the author of the entire book, then the Holy Spirit approved of a misrepresentation in the Bible, for He ascribed the writing of the entire book of Isaiah to Isaiah the prophet. Those who believe in the verbal inspiration and in the infallibility of inspiration should demand no further argument, for this New Testament evidence should be conclusive. The New Testament writers say Isaiah wrote the entire book!

Conclusion

While the argument for Christ's divinity is built upon his fulfillment of prophecy, the modernist denies that this is even possible. So, there exists no ground for compromise between the liberal and the fundamentalist.

– Cecil Willis, *Truth Magazine*

Part 1 of 2

Isaiah



Part 2 of 2

Isaiah



ISAIAH

Suffering-Servant-King Covenant Family of All Nations Hope for a Renewed Creation

JUDGMENT!
ISRAEL'S REBELLION WILL COME AT A COST

ISAIAH'S MESSAGE:
THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S COVENANT PROMISES
FUTURE KINGDOM FROM THE LINE OF DAVID
ISRAEL'S ORDINANCE TO THE COVENANT
GOD'S BLESSING TO THE NATIONS

WHOSE VOICE ARE WE HEARING IN CHAPTERS 40-66?
(THE PROPHET IS FIRST AFTER HEZEKIAH) AND THEN YEREMIAH

THE VOICE OF ISMAEL TRANSPORTED INTO THE FUTURE

THE VOICE OF ISMAEL AND HIS PROPHETIC DISCIPLES
(SEE BIBLE 29:10-12, 30:2-3)

720 B.C. ISRAEL 530 B.C.

720 B.C. ISRAEL 530 B.C.

1-12 JUDGMENT & HOPE FOR JERUSALEM

1-7 **PURIFYING FIRES**
OLD JERUSALEM: REBELLION, INEQUITY & INJUSTICE
NEW JERUSALEM: JUSTICE & PEACE FOR ALL NATIONS

8 **ISAIAH'S TEMPLE VISION**
NO, YOU'RE PURIFIED! NOW GO.

9 **A HOLY SEED?**
A NEW THRONE FROM THE STOMACH OF DAVID'S FAMILY

10-12 **NEW JERUSALEM**
FREEDOM FROM OPPRESSION
POWERED BY GOD'S SPIRIT

13-27 JUDGMENT & HOPE FOR THE NATIONS

13-15 **FALL OF BABYLON & ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS**
I WILL ACCUSE TO NEBUCADNEZZAR AND HIS PRINCE AND MOST FROM GOD!

16-27 **A TALE OF TWO CITIES**
PROPHETIC OF REBELLION OPPORTUNITY - RECEIVED AFTER PRICES FROM CHAPTERS 1-12
THE LEFTY CITY: WEAPON OF WAR
THE NEW JERUSALEM: CITY OF PEACE

40-48 ANNOUNCEMENT OF HOPE

40 **"COME, LET US CONFRONT MY PEOPLE!"**
- CHALLENGE TO OBEY!
- ISRAEL CAN RESTORE HOPE - GOD'S KINGDOM IS COMING

41-48 **THE TRIAL**
THE ACCUSATION: ISRAEL'S SIN
GOD'S RESPONSE: ISRAEL'S SIN IS NOT THE REASON FOR THE TRIAL
THE RIGHT CONVICTION: ISRAEL'S SIN IS NOT THE REASON FOR THE TRIAL
ISRAEL AT 48: STILL REBELLIOUS
GOD'S GOING TO DO A GREAT THING FOR ISRAEL

28-39 THE RISE & FALL OF JERUSALEM

28-35 **ACCUSATION OF JERUSALEM'S LEADERS**
NO! YOU'LL BE SHOWN TO THE KINGDOM OF LORDS!

36-39 **HEZEKIAH'S FALL**
NO! BABYLON WILL BE TAKEN & DESTROYED!

49-55 THE SERVANT FULFILLS GOD'S MISSION

49 **GOD'S SERVANT**
YOU ARE NOT ISRAEL! GOD HAS CHOSEN HIS SERVANT TO RESTORE ISRAEL

50 **REJECTED & KILLED**
I REJECTED YOU AND HATED YOU

51-55 **YOU ARE TO RECOVER**
THE LOST SERVANT & RESTORE THE SERVANT

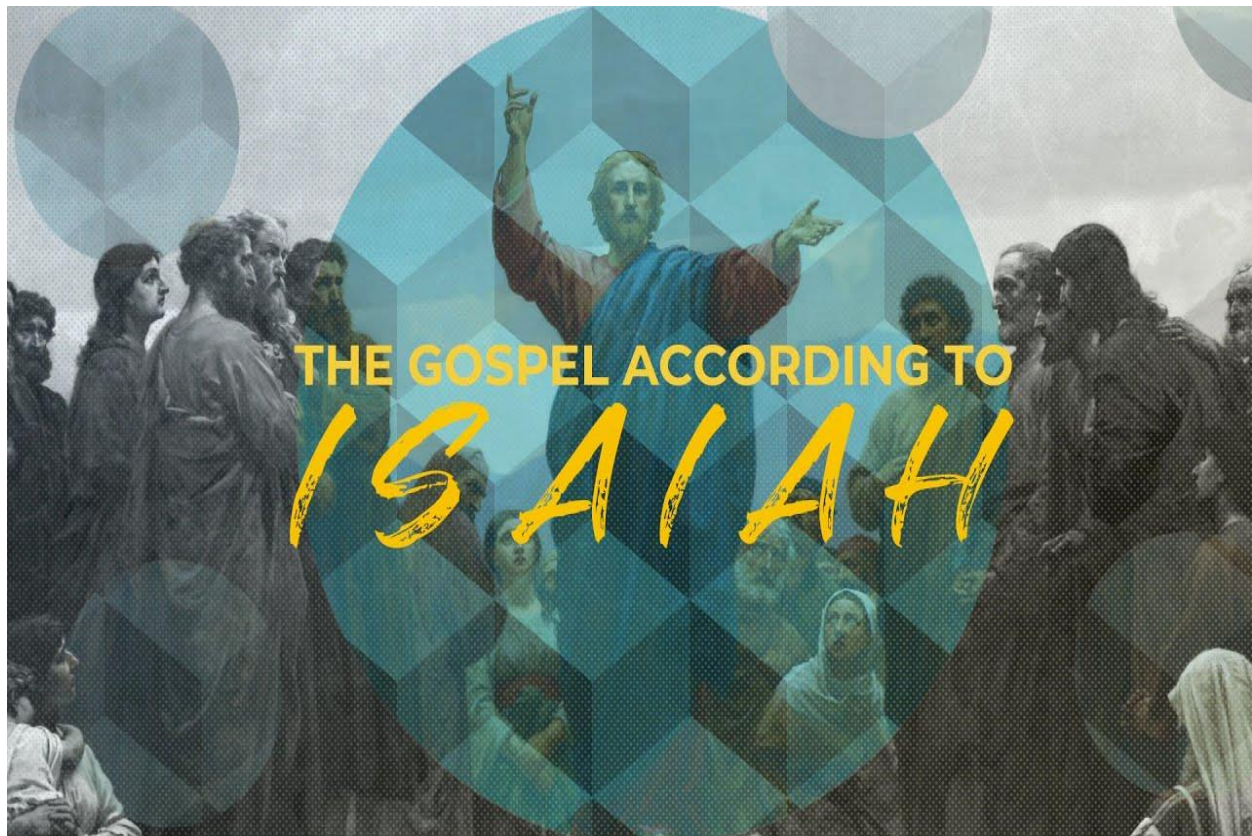
56-66 THE SERVANTS INHERIT GOD'S KINGDOM

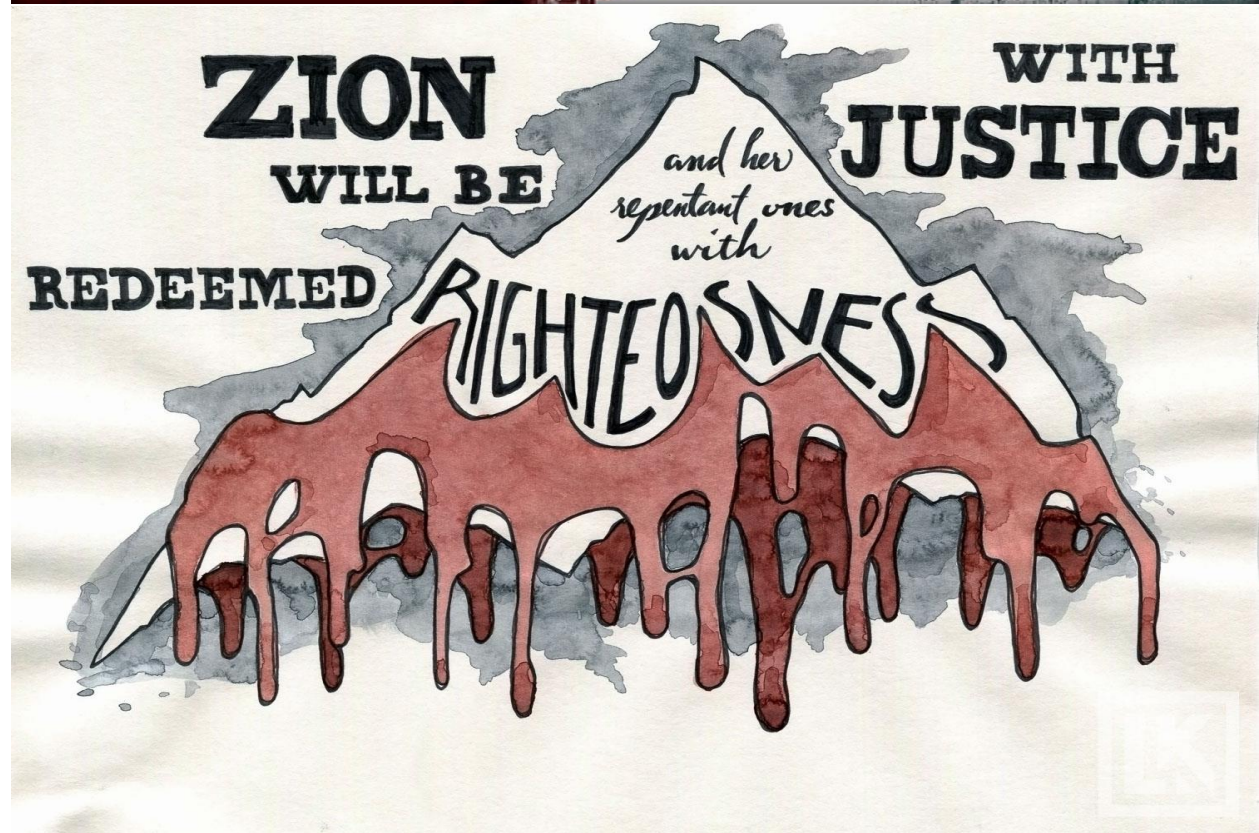
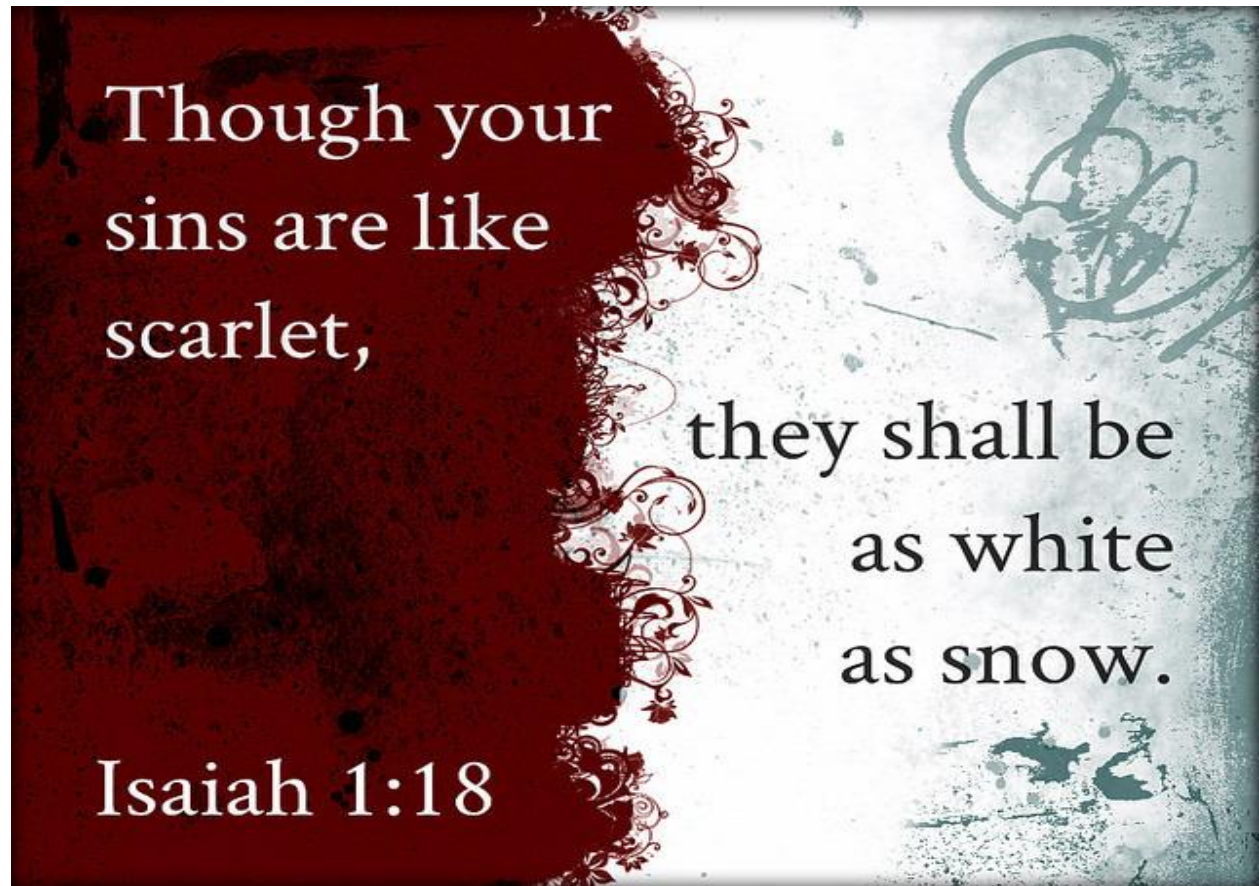
56-66 **THE NEW JERUSALEM**
THE WICKED: TAKE GOD'S JUSTICE REMOVED FROM THE CITY
THE SERVANTS: INHERIT THE NEW CREATION

57-66 **PRAYER OF REPENTANCE**
SERVANT ANNOUNCES GOD'S KINGDOM
CONTRAST DELIGHTEN THE WICKED & THE SERVANTS
ALL NATIONS INVITED TO JOIN GOD'S COVENANT FAMILY

EXILE!

created by the Bible Project

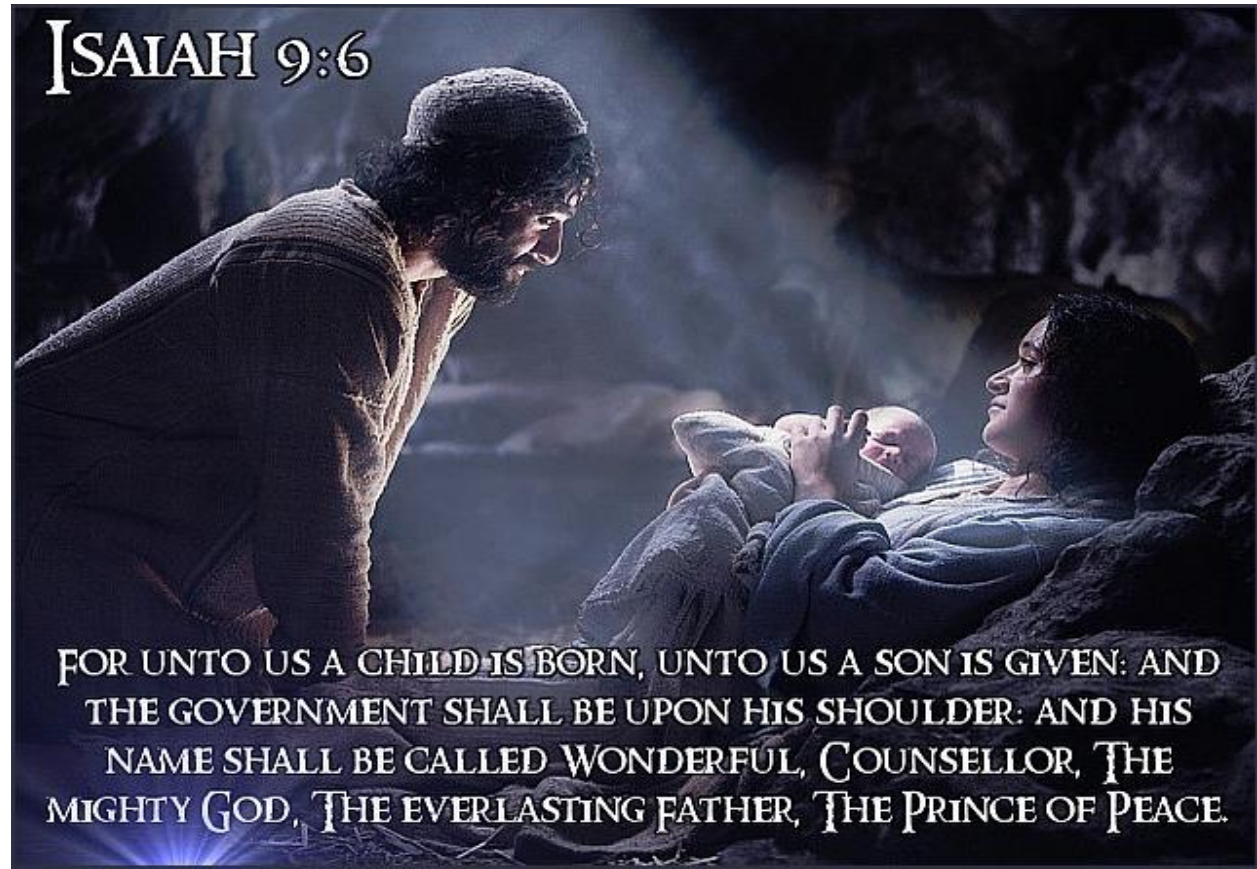




**In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also
the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and
lifted up, and his train filled the temple.**

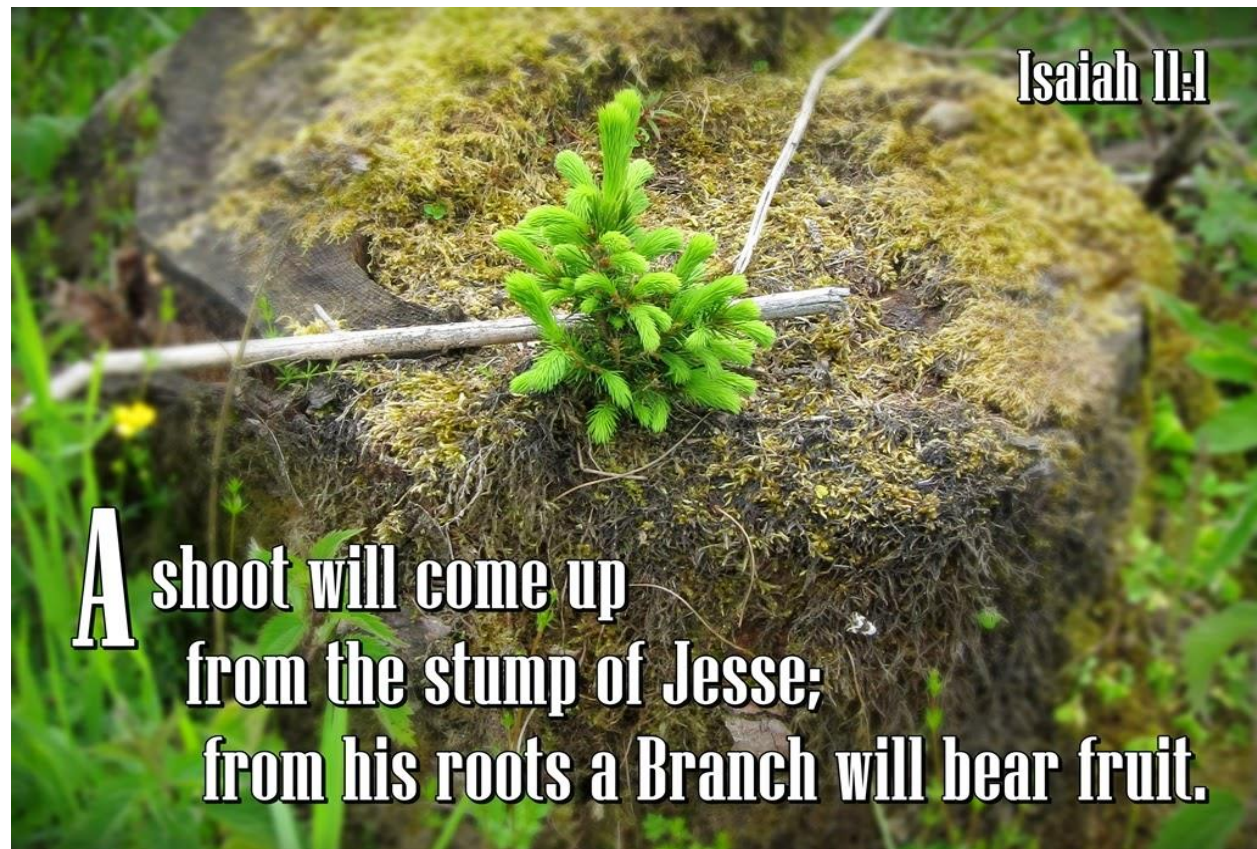
- Isaiah 6:1 (KJV) -





ISAIAH 9:6

FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN: AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER: AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.



Isaiah 11:1

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Netzer. Olive trees maybe the hardiest plants in the world. On average they can live up to 500 years, but many live more than 1,000 years. They can survive being cut down, chopped up, and even burned in a fire. So long as even a tiny part of their root system remains, they will always come back. And when they do, they rise from the ground or a stump in the form of a small and tender, green shoot. The ancient Israelites had a word for these new sprigs of life, *netzer*.

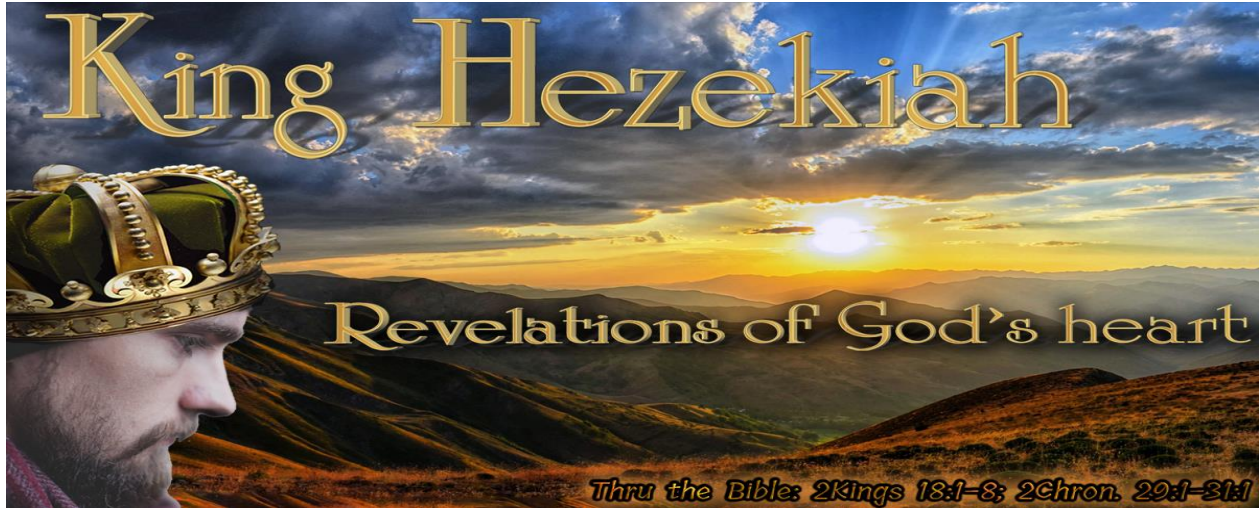
Sometime in the first century, as Jewish refugees returned from exile, they settled in an area near the Sea of Galilee and named their new town Nazareth after the tender, new shoots of the Olive tree. Jesus grew up and lived most of his life in Nazareth. In fact, the Gospels say that throughout his life, many people called him “Jesus of Nazareth.” From the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, he was associated with the idea of new life and new beginnings. His work at the cross removes the curse of sin and death and provides a promise of something new. The Old Testament prophet anticipated Jesus when he wrote, “He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. For he bore the sin of many, and he made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:2, 12). **Christian Standard Magazine**

Isaiah's Servant Songs Set The Stage

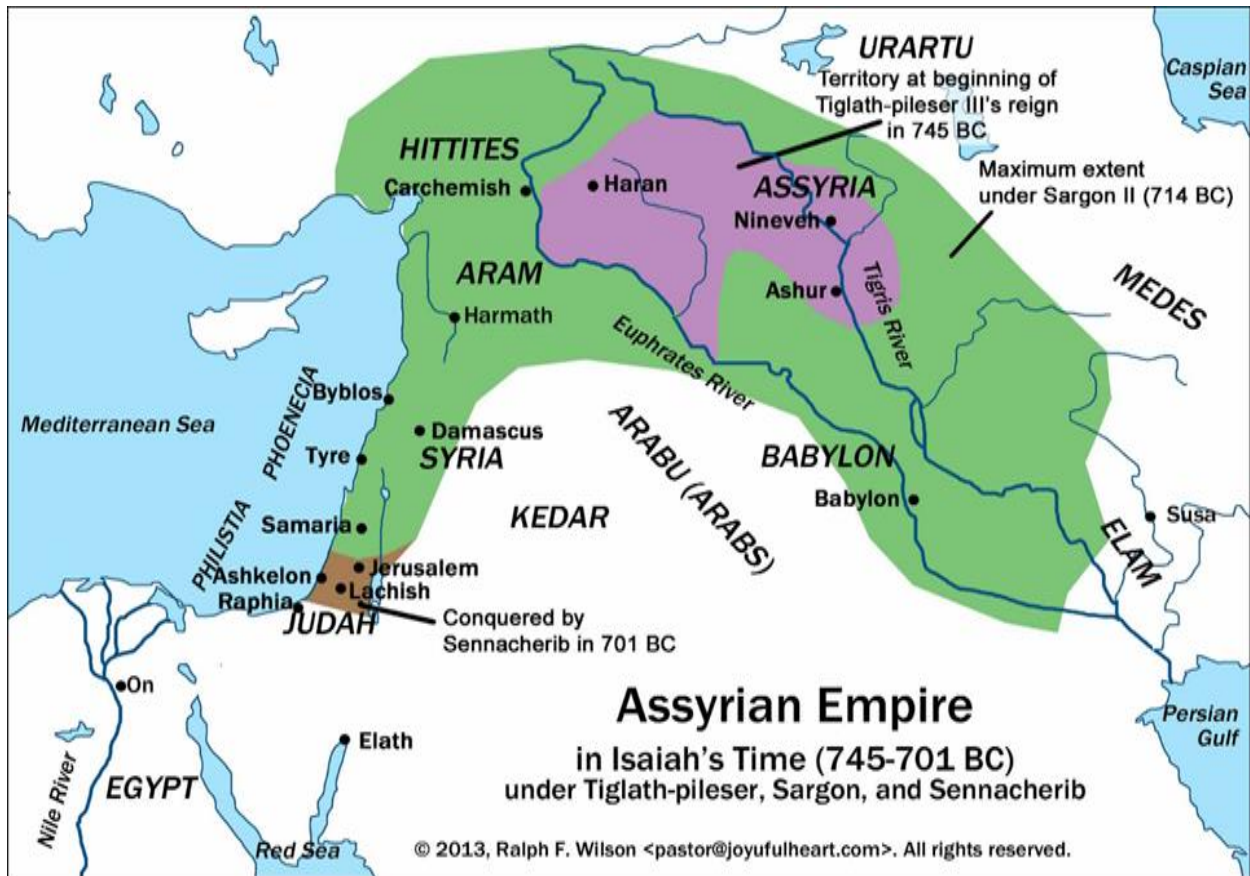
A type is a foreshadowing of something to come called "antitype"

- That which foreshadows something to come in the future is called the "type."
- That which is foreshadowed and is in the future which the type corresponds to is called the "antitype."
- In summary, Old Testament types foreshadow New Testament antitypes.

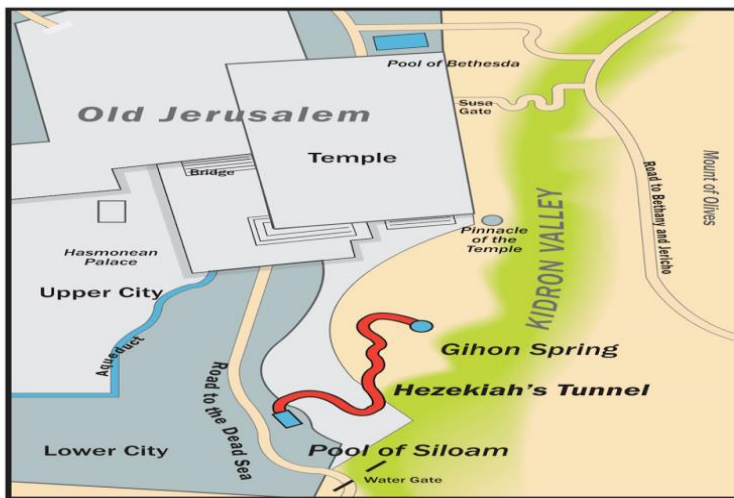
King Hezekiah Is A Type Of The Good Servant



NOTE: EGYPTIAN SYMBOLS SHOUT!



Hezekiah's Tunnel

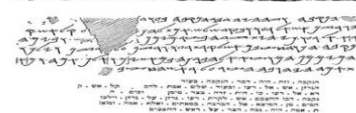


Tunnel Excavation

- The tunnel was excavated during the reign of Hezekiah, King of Judaea, around 710 BC.
- It was cut into bedrock over half a kilometer and ~40 meters beneath the City of David (Ophel) in Old Jerusalem.
- A 6 percent gradient was designed into the excavation to allow water to flow from the Gihon Spring into the Pool of Siloam.
- The tunnel was discovered in 1838 by American biblical archaeologist Edward Robinson.
- The exact dating of Hezekiah's Tunnel has been disputed.

Tunnel Inscription

An ancient Hebrew inscription found inside the tunnel explains that two teams of men excavated the tunnel by simultaneously starting at opposite ends and digging towards each other through the bedrock until they met in the middle.



Caption: The Siloam Inscription, with transcription. Source: From Benzinger, "Hebraische Archäologie."

Hezekiah's Tunnel in the Bible:

2 KINGS 20:20 "The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his might and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?"

2 Chronicles 32:2-4a "And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, he planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the brook that flowed through the land."

2 Chronicles 32:30a "This same Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the city of David."

Sources: www.zionism-israel.com, Benzinger, "Hebraische Archäologie." Scripture: English Standard Version.

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Keil & Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament

2 Kings 18: 16 - Hezekiah certainly did wrong, when, after taking the first step, he was alarmed at the disastrous consequences, and sought to purchase once more the peace which he himself had broken, by a fresh submission and renewal of the payment of tribute. This false step on the part of the pious king, which arose from a **temporary weakness of faith**, nevertheless turned into a blessing through the pride of Sennacherib and the covenant-faithfulness of the Lord towards him and his kingdom. Sennacherib demanded the enormous sum of three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold (more than two and a half million thalers, or 375,000); and **Hezekiah not only gave him all the gold and silver found in the treasures of the temple and palace, but had the gold plates with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple (2 Chronicles 29:3) removed, to send them to the king of Assyria.** **הַמְּנוֹת**, lit., the supports, the posts, of the doors.

Pulpit Commentary

2 Kings 18 Verse 21 - *Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt.* Sennacherib had good information. **Hezekiah's embassy to Egypt (Isaiah 30:2-7) was known to him; and he rightly judged that Hezekiah was expecting aid from this quarter.** This expectation he ridicules. What is Egypt but a "bruised reed"? The Nile bulrush (רִצְוֹן) has a goodly show; it rears itself aloft, and looks strong and stately; but use it as a staff, lean upon it, and it snaps at once. Such is Pharaoh - nay, he is worse; he is a **bruised** reed, which can give no support at all, even for a moment. The Assyrian monarch was justified in his contempt. Egypt had never yet given any effectual support to the states attacked by Assyria. Shebek gave no manner of aid to Hoshea, but allowed Samaria to be conquered in B.C. 722 without making any effort on her behalf. In B.C. 720 he came to the aid of Gaza, but Gaza was captured notwithstanding. In B.C. 711 either he or Sabatok undertook the protection of Ashdod, but with lack of success. "Kings of Egypt" assisted the Ascalonites against Sennacherib himself in B.C. 701, and were again completely defeated. Sargon calls the King of Egypt, whose aid was invited by the Ashdedites, "a monarch who could not save them." *On which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; i.e.* trust in Egypt will not only bring a country no advantage, but it will actually instead bring positive injury. The sharp siliceous casing of a reed might run into the hand and give an ugly wound.

ISAIAH AND KING HEZEKIAH

By Tryn Paxton/Illustrated by Virginia Sargent

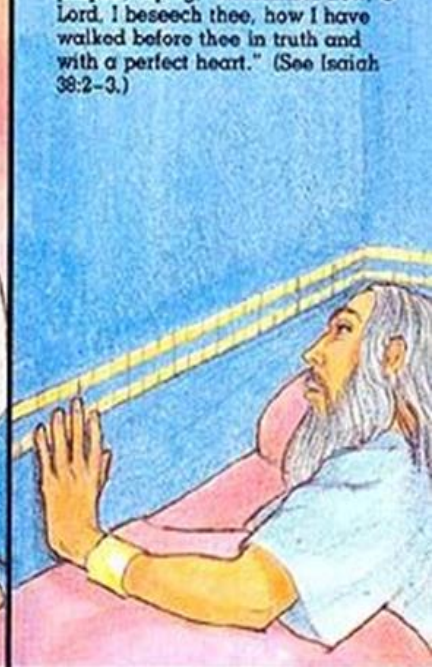
1 King Hezekiah of Judah was a righteous leader. He prayed for the Lord's help in defending his country from its enemies, and he followed the counsel of the prophet Isaiah. (See Isaiah 37.)



2 When King Hezekiah became very ill, the prophet Isaiah visited him and warned him that he would soon die. (See Isaiah 38:1.)



3 Upon hearing this, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept. He did not want to die, so he prayed, crying, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart." (See Isaiah 38:2-3.)



4 The Lord told Isaiah to visit King Hezekiah again and tell him that He had seen the king's tears and had heard his prayers. The Lord promised to add fifteen years to King Hezekiah's life. (See Isaiah 38:4-5.)



5 As a sign that He would keep His promise to heal King Hezekiah, the Lord caused the sun to go backward ten degrees. Isaiah told King Hezekiah to watch the shadow on a large sundial to see the miraculous sign. (See Isaiah 38:7-8.)



6 King Hezekiah recovered from his illness and composed a beautiful psalm to praise the Lord's goodness. "The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments," he wrote. (See Isaiah 38: 9-20.)





GOD ADDS 15 YEARS TO HEZEKIAH'S LIFE

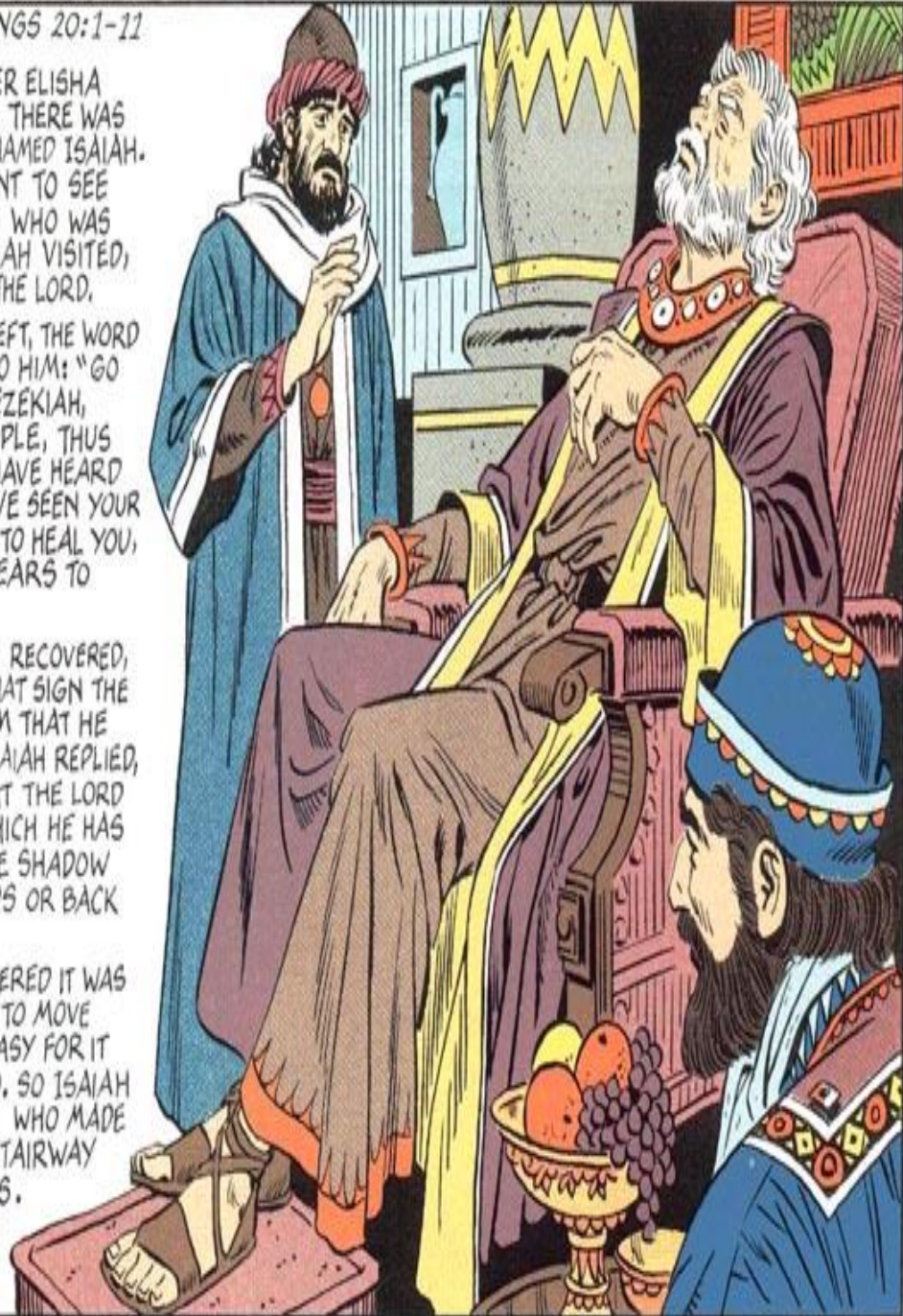
II KINGS 20:1-11

AFTER ELISHA DIED, THERE WAS A PROPHET IN JUDAH NAMED ISAIAH. ONE DAY, ISAIAH WENT TO SEE THE KING, HEZEKIAH, WHO WAS VERY ILL. WHILE ISAIAH VISITED, HEZEKIAH PRAYED TO THE LORD.

AFTER ISAIAH LEFT, THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO HIM: "GO BACK AND SAY TO HEZEKIAH, THE RULER OF MY PEOPLE, THUS SAYS THE LORD: 'I HAVE HEARD YOUR PRAYER, I HAVE SEEN YOUR TEARS. I AM GOING TO HEAL YOU, AND I WILL ADD 15 YEARS TO YOUR LIFE.'"

AFTER HEZEKIAH RECOVERED, HE ASKED ISAIAH WHAT SIGN THE LORD WOULD GIVE HIM THAT HE WOULD BE CURED. ISAIAH REPLIED, "THIS IS THE SIGN THAT THE LORD WILL DO THE THING WHICH HE HAS PROMISED: SHALL THE SHADOW GO FORWARD 10 STEPS OR BACK 10 STEPS?"

HEZEKIAH ANSWERED IT WAS EASY FOR A SHADOW TO MOVE FORWARD, BUT NOT EASY FOR IT TO MOVE BACKWARD. SO ISAIAH CALLED TO THE LORD, WHO MADE THE SHADOW ON A STAIRWAY MOVE BACK 10 STEPS.



Hezekiah an amazing type of Christ

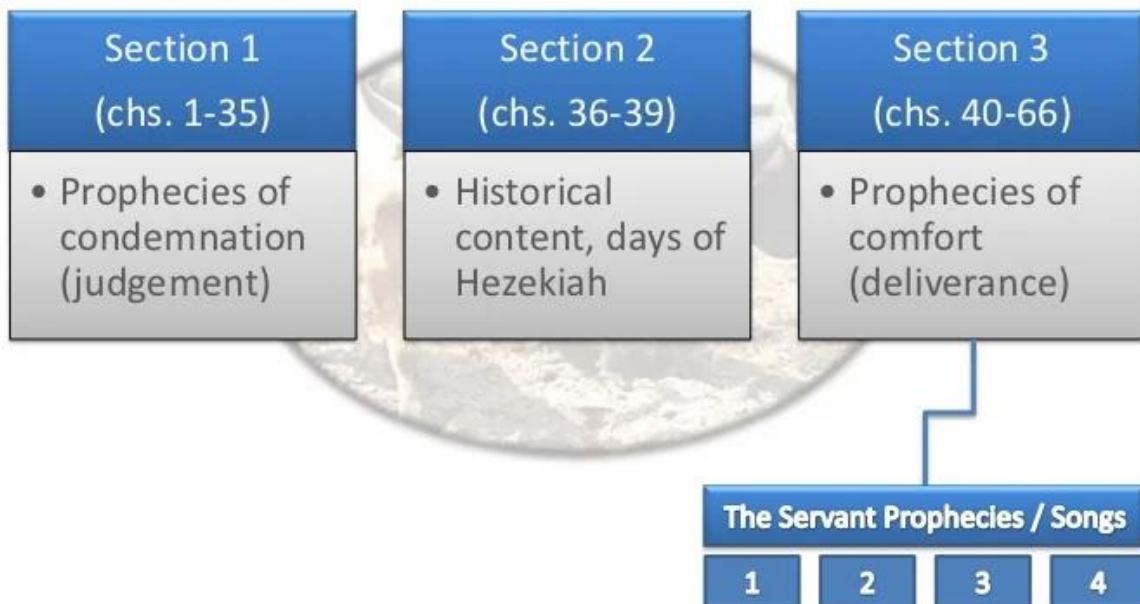


12th December 2012

The Servant Songs of Isaiah - Song 4

12

The Prophecy of Isaiah **in outline**



16th February 2012

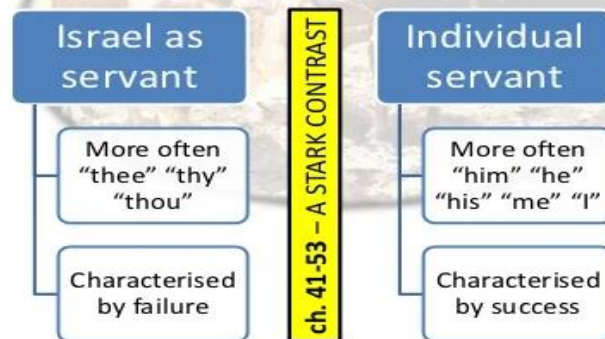
The Servant Songs of Isaiah - Introduction / Background

7



Locating the Four Songs

- Are all contained in **Isaiah – Section 3** (ch. 40-66)
- **Phrase “my servant” appears 12 times in ch. 41-53**, compared to only 3 times in the previous 40 chs. (and those 3 are specific – Isaiah, Eliakim, David)



Gentle

Patient

Song 1 – Tone of Service

Quiet

Encouraging

Isaiah 42 v 1-4 [5-7] The Lord commissions his special servant ^{ESV}

¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. ² He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. ³ A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. ⁴ He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

[⁵ Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: ⁶ I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; ⁷ To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.]

28th March 2012

The Servant Songs of Isaiah - Song 1

7

Word-led

Cooperation

Song 2 – Origin of service

Submission

God's glory

Isaiah 49 v 1-6 God calls his special servant ^{NCV} **The servant brings salvation** ^{HCSB}

¹ Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; **The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.** ² And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; ³ And said unto me, **Thou art my servant, O Israel,** in whom I will be glorified. ⁴ Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. ⁵ And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. ⁶ And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

The individual servant epitomises all national Israel should have been...

23rd May 2012

The Servant Songs of Isaiah - Song 2

6

Teachableness

Trust

Song 3 – Basis of service

Commitment

Surrender

Isaiah 50 v 4-9 **God's Servant Obeys** ^{NCV} **The LORD's Servant Trusts in the LORD's Help** ^{GWT} **The Servant's Humiliation and Vindication** ^{NRSV}

4 The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. **5** The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. **6** I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

7 For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. **8** He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. **9** Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

14th November 2012

The Servant Songs of Isaiah - Song 3

7

Song 4 & Hezekiah (part 1)

Isaiah 52 v 13-53 v 6

13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. **14** As many were astonished at thee: his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: **15** So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

53v1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? **2** For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. **3** He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. **4** Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **5** But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. **6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Song starts with a prophecy ("shall" x2). Hezekiah was "extolled" following miraculous destruction of Assyrian host ("magnified" = same Hebrew word) ^a

Hezekiah "sick unto death" ^b, seemingly struck down by a form of leprosy ^c

^a 2 Chron. 32v23, ^b 2 Chron. 32v24, ^c Isa. 38v21

12th December 2012

The Servant Songs of Isaiah - Song 4

8

Behold My Servant, whom I uphold

Isaiah 42:1-4

Rabbinic scholars, noting the word's individualistic aspect, have sought the Servant's identity in such figures as Jeremiah, Cyrus, and even Isaiah, himself. While it is true that Isaiah does not explicitly link the title 'Messiah' with the 'Servant of the Lord,' none who take the overall witness of Scriptures seriously can doubt that both figures refer to the same person.

Even within the writings of Isaiah it is clear that both figures are uniquely anointed (61:1); each brings light unto the Gentiles (55:4); neither is pretentious in His first appearance (7:14, 15; 11:1; cf. 53:2; 42:3); and the title of Davidic 'branch' rests upon them both (11:1-4). Equally significant are the dual factuality of their humiliation and exaltation (49:7; 52:13-15). Undeniably, Jesus saw the blueprint for His ministry in Isaiah's *Servant* (Luke 22:37).

The Source of the Servant's Power

God says He delights in His Servant (42:1). A voice from heaven confirmed this when Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan (Mark 1:11). Jesus' baptism was not, as it has been for so many, a symbolic testimony of repentance and faith; rather, it was an occasion marking Heaven's full acceptance of His life. For thirty years He had lived an inconspicuous life. But He had lived those many years in perfect fellowship with His Father. By the age of twelve Jesus knew that the service of His Father took first place. And that dedication controlled every aspect of His life, culminating in a three-year targeted ministry in which He completed the work assigned Him as God's 'righteous Servant' (53:11). Well did Isaiah say of the Servant, 'He shall draw His breath in the fear of the Lord' (11:3).

We know Jesus was born into a world where He was without any human advantage. He could not turn to family position or rank or influential friends, the resources we so naturally look to for help in achieving our purposes. Nor did He clutch at the prerogatives of Deity; He 'made Himself nothing' (Phil 2:6). From the outset God's Messiah drew strength from the Spirit's inexhaustible storehouse. In essence, He abandoned Himself to the will of His Father. It was enough that the Spirit of the Lord rested upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and might (Isaiah 11:2). God, who is faithful, held His Servant fast (42:1). Each of us has an innate tendency to want to control every aspect of his life. Isaiah's Servant abandoned Himself totally to the will of God. His life of quiet submission stands as the Eternal's testimony to what it means to live by faith.

Isaiah also speaks of Abraham's descendants as God's servant (41:8-9). It is evident that the prophet is thinking of individuals who, like the nation's first patriarch, have been called to know and serve God. He is committed to sustain us in our desolate places (41:18).

The ancient rabbis, referring to Isaiah 12:3, spoke of drawing forth from God's Spirit ('the wells of salvation') as occasion for great joy.

The Nature of the Servant's Work

'He shall bring forth justice to the nations' (42:1). *Mishpat*, rendered 'justice,' encompasses the idea of judgment but, more fundamentally, the law (the *Torah*) which was to go forth from Jerusalem (2:3). The Messiah will bring the rule of God to all nations. The Bible places little confidence in man's ability to achieve justice (Isaiah 59:8). For true justice depends on establishment of righteousness (same Hebrew word as justice), which only the 'zeal of the Lord of hosts' can make a reality (9:6-7). We eagerly await God's 'new heavens and a new earth' when we will no longer 'toil in vain' (65:17, 23).

When Matthew reflected upon the opening verses of Isaiah 42, he saw more than the establishment of courtroom justice. Along with the other early disciples he had heard Jesus say that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem' (Luke 24:47). The message coming forth from the Holy City would embrace something so grand that even remote Gentiles would anticipate its proclamation (Isaiah 42:4).

Matthew says the recipients of that message would put their hope 'in His Name' (Matthew 12:21). The farthest islands are drawn to a Person who reveals the law in its fullness; He embodies the essence of the law. It is no small matter to realize that Matthew saw the relevance of Isaiah 42 in the context of Jesus' healing the sick who followed Him (Matthew 12:15). What stood before Matthew was more than legal principles; he saw the personal expression of God's mercy, a God whose forgiveness could be realized most tangibly. *If only we treated others the way God treats us, we would be 'like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail' (58:11).*

The Character of the Servant

'He will not shout or cry out or raise His voice in the streets' (42:2). The expression, 'cry out,' brings to mind the fearlessly raised voices telling of man's weakness and God's saving strength (40:6ff). God's servants should seek to boldly tell of the wonders of God's grace. But God's Servant-Messiah doesn't come as an orator-debater; neither do we see Him advertising and promoting Himself. When Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God, He didn't use manipulative or coercive means. His disciples even heard Him on occasion instruct others to be silent concerning Him (Matthew 12:16); He knew that His Father will see to the revelation of His identity at just the right time.

Jesus was never anxious about the outcome of His mission. Quietness and calmness come to those who have learned to entrust themselves and their work unto God. The Almighty counsels us not to *haste*; We might read Isaiah's words, 'The one who trusts will not panic' (28:16).

The Confidence of the Servant

The Messiah knew that the Father had granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all those whom the Father had given Him (John 6:37). Thus, could Isaiah state, 'He won't falter or be discouraged' (42:4).

Large results, and those achieved quickly, seem to be the primary criteria whereby the 'success' of an individual (or work) is evaluated. That approach tends to be sadly superficial.

Jesus coined an expression to gently chide His own, calling them 'little-faiths' (Luke 12:28). Although their faith would become more rock-like, it was only the Servant-Messiah who possessed unlimited spiritual power (John 3:34). Only that authority could establish the justice of God in a way that brought resilient hope to a guilty, sinful world. Israel is encouraged to meet her adversaries with the knowledge that although she is no more than a 'worm,' God Himself will help her (Isaiah 41:14). All confidence stems from grace. It must, for the Law calls us to a level of obedience beyond our capabilities (Matthew 5:48). The law's glory, like that reflected from the face of Moses, causes us to recoil in fear. Only the Servant-Messiah has flawlessly met its standards. His glory, while reflecting the truth, is also full of grace (John 1:14).

The reason for our confidence before God is that Jesus welcomes sinners into His fellowship (Luke 15:1–2). At best we are poor in spirit, hungry and thirsting after righteousness. God gives us what we desperately need, promising to fill us (Matthew 5:6) as He more than compensates for the crushing weight of our own personal failures.

Israel looked to God when all the chips were down and there was no place else to go. How remarkable that even then He condescends to welcome us. He runs to embrace the lost son despite the fact that his repentance actually began in his belly (Luke 15:16–17).¹

¹ Sacks, S. D. (1998). [*Revealing Jesus as Messiah: Identifying Isaiah's Servant of the Lord*](#) (pp. 26–36). Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications.

The Four Servant Songs **table 2**

Song	Isaiah reference (minimum)	Direct quotes in NT	Quotations
One	ch. 42 v 1-4 [probably to v7]	1	42 v 1-4 cited Matthew 12 v 18-21
Two	ch. 49 v 1-6	1	49 v 6 cited Acts 13 v 47
Three	ch. 50 v 4-9	Nil	No citations
Four	ch. 52 v 13 – ch. 53 v 12	9	52 v 15 cited Romans 15 v 21; 53 v 1 cited John 12 v 38; 53 v 1 cited Romans 10 v 16; 53 v 4 cited Matthew 8 v 17; 53 v 4-5 cited 1 Peter 2 v 24; 53 v 7-8 cited Acts 8 v 32-33; 53 v 9 cited 1 Peter 2 v 22; 53 v 12 cited Mark 15 v 28; 53 v 12 cited Luke 22 v 37
		11 (/ 110 = 10%)	

16th February 2012

The Servant Songs of Isaiah - Introduction / Background

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The Fourth Servant Song **table 3**

Isaiah ch. 52 / 53	Part of OT passage particularly drawn on	Direct quotation NT
52 v 15	"...that which had not been told them shall they see..."	Romans 15 v 21
53 v 1	"Who hath believed our report?"	John 12 v 38
53 v 1	"Who hath believed our report?"	Romans 10 v 16
53 v 4	"...he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows..."	Matthew 8 v 17
53 v 4-5	"...with his stripes we are healed."	1 Peter 2 v 24
53 v 7-8	"...he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter..."	Acts 8 v 32-33
53 v 9	"...he had done no violence, neither... any deceit in... mouth."	1 Peter 2 v 22
53 v 12	"...he was numbered with the transgressors..."	Mark 15 v 28
53 v 12	"...he was numbered with the transgressors..."	Luke 22 v 37

16th February 2012

The Servant Songs of Isaiah - Introduction / Background

15

The 5th Gospel & The 5th Evangelist

Why the Prophet Isaiah is called the “Fifth Evangelist”

Even the Book of Isaiah is nicknamed the “Fifth Gospel.”

The Old Testament is filled with various prophecies that are fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus Christ, but the Book of Isaiah is often signaled out for its accuracy.

The Prophet Isaiah is often called the, “**Fifth Evangelist**,” and the Book of Isaiah is referred to as the “**Fifth Gospel**.” It’s easy to see why.

When you think of scriptural passages which point to a coming king, Isaiah chapters 9 and 11 come to mind. When you think of a royal figure who will suffer to bring about God’s long-planned redemption, the ‘servant songs’ in Isaiah 40–55, climaxing in chapter 53, are the obvious places to go. And when you reflect that the New Testament celebrates the strange victory of God, through his anointed one, over all the dark forces in the world, all with the aim of bringing about the new heavens and new earth, then Isaiah 56–66 is the natural place to look.

But it is that middle section which stands out to most interpreters today, and again it’s not difficult to see why. These chapters constitute one of the greatest poems ever written, touching the heights and depths of human and spiritual experience, reaching a sustained climax which opens a vista on creation itself renewed and restored.

If these chapters had been lost for many centuries, and then turned up in some archaeologist’s dig, every newspaper in the world would offer excited headlines: a world-class masterpiece had been discovered! But for most people – even for most Christians – it’s just ‘that bit in the middle of Isaiah’.

So, what is the passage basically *about*? It is addressed to the people of Israel in the Babylonian exile about which Deuteronomy and Isaiah had warned in chapter 39. Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem, taking most of the Judaeans captive into an exile from which they must have thought they would never return. The prophets had insisted this exile was divine punishment, covenant retribution which was bound to follow Israel's long-running idolatry and sin.

But the worst thing of all was that Israel's God, YHWH, had himself abandoned his people. He had left the Temple to its fate, as Ezekiel describes. So, one of the main frames of this section is the great promise of YHWH's return, in 40.1–11 and again in 52.7–12. The prophet envisages a voice calling out a message of comfort to Zion: it's over! Your punishment is finished! So, flatten the hills and fill in the valleys and roll out the red carpet, because he's coming back at last!

Then there follows the strange combination of descriptions: Israel's God is gentle like a shepherd taking care of lambs, and majestic as the one who holds the whole creation in the hollow of his hand. The passage looks ahead to 52, where Zion's watchmen are told to shout because they will see YHWH in plain sight, returning to Zion at last. This time promise is coupled with commands about the Jews returning from Babylon, going back to rebuild the Temple.

These two passages then point on to the conclusion of the section in chapters 54 and 55. The covenant will be renewed (54), and thus creation itself will be renewed (55). When God does this for Israel – all the nations will share in the blessing. All this is expressed in glorious, hope-filled poetry. The heart of the whole passage is the steadily developing picture of the 'Servant of YHWH'. This character is introduced in chapter 42, and the reader wonders: who is this? He appears royal, like the figure in chapters 9 and 11. Is he 'Israel' itself? In a sense yes; he is given that name. But in a sense no: as the picture develops in chapter 49 and 50 (after further promises, and terrifying warnings for Babylon), **the 'servant' appears to stand over against the people, doing for them what they cannot do for themselves.** Simultaneously, we are introduced to another character: 'YHWH's "arm"'. YHWH has rolled up his sleeves, says the prophet (52.10), so that his own personal power will do the job, overthrowing Babylon and rescuing Israel.

But in chapter 53 it seems that the 'Arm' and the 'Servant' are one and the same: 'who would have thought,' the prophet asks, that *he* — this bruised bleeding one — would be 'YHWH's arm'? (53.1). But so it is: the announcement YHWH is coming back to save and to heal his people, gentle like a shepherd but majestic over the world, is fulfilled in the Servant himself, in his death and subsequent vindication. This is the way, the only way, in which the sins of the people could be dealt with.

It doesn't take much imagination to see how all this was drawn on eagerly by the first Christians. When they said that 'the Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures', they had the entire sequence of thought of chapters 40–55. This is what it looked like when Israel's elongated 'exile' was undone at last. This is the means by which the sins not only of Israel but of the whole world would be dealt with and filled with the divine glory.

The more we get to know Isaiah chapters

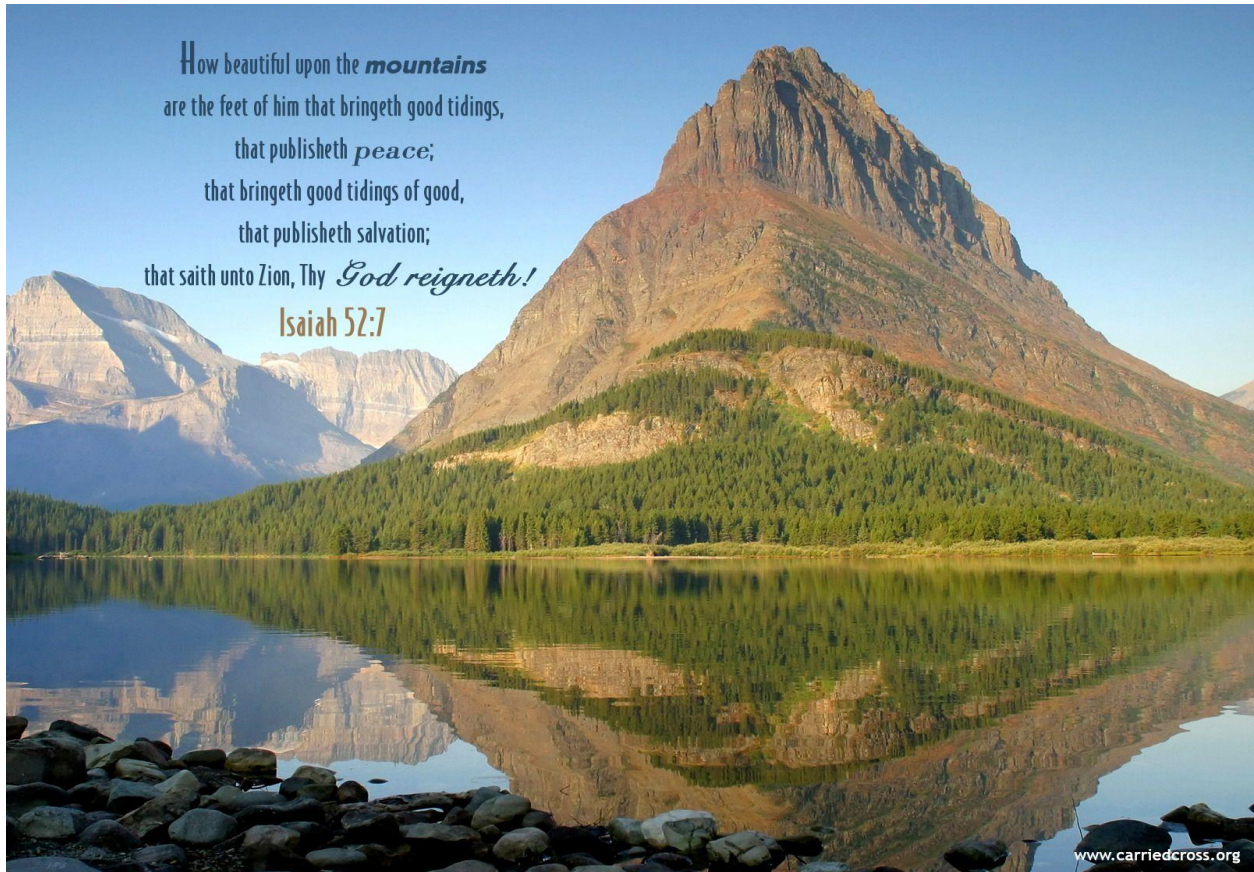
40–55, the more we will understand how the

first followers of Jesus understood 'gospel'

The more we get to know Isaiah 40–55, the more we will understand how the first followers of Jesus understood 'the gospel' (Isaiah 40.9; 52.7). The more we relish the sweep and subtlety of its poetry, the more dimensions of salvation we will glimpse.

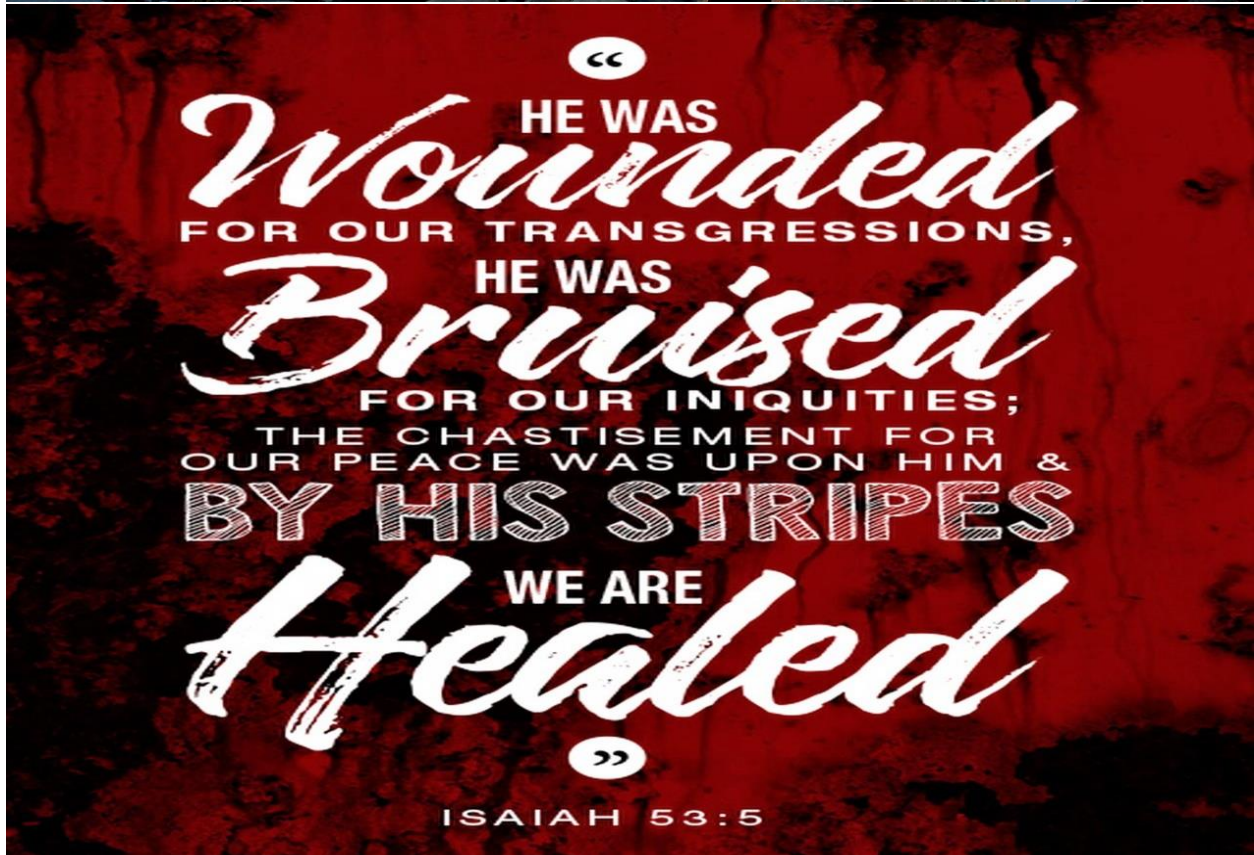
– *N. T. Wright* (Edited)





How beautiful upon the *mountains*
are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
that publisheth *peace*;
that bringeth good tidings of good,
that publisheth salvation;
that saith unto Zion, Thy *God reigneth!*
Isaiah 52:7

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“
HE WAS
Wounded
FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS,
HE WAS
Bruised
FOR OUR INIQUITIES;
THE CHASTISEMENT FOR
OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM &
BY HIS STRIPES
WE ARE
Healed
”

ISAIAH 53:5

THE FOURTH SERVANT POEM: THE SERVANT'S VICTORY

(Isaiah 52:13–15; 53:1–12)

This is the fourth Servant Song. The passage presents difficulties for various reasons: the use of the passage in the NT to describe the mission of Jesus; it is such a notable departure from the patterns of thought of the OT in general and of Second Isaiah; and obscurities in the text itself. The central problem is the identity of the Servant. The speaker does not identify himself, and nothing suggests that he is not the author of the poem. He speaks for a group, and nothing indicates any other group than Israel. But words of Yahweh are found in the opening and closing verses of the passage.

Yahweh is the speaker in 52:13–15. The first verse does not fit well with what follows; the echo of 52:13 is found only in 53:11–12, if the opening verse is in its proper place. It is altogether possible in a poem containing so many cryptic elements that this line is intended to lead to the two concluding verses; but as it stands it must be judged harsh, and the possibility that it is displaced cannot be excluded.

The following verse (vs. 14) introduces the theme, which runs through the entire poem as far as 53:10; the Servant suffers, and his suffering is such that he is physically disfigured. The allusion in 52:15 to kings and nations is difficult to interpret. In the preceding poems the nations and their kings are told they will see the great saving act of Yahweh. If there is a connection between this song and preceding poems, then the saving act of Yahweh must be the topic of this poem. The character of the saving act is such that it should astonish nations and close the mouth of kings. Whatever is meant, this revelation of the Servant is directed not only to Israel, but to the nations. The Servant has already been described as light of the nations (42:6, 49:6).

The poet describes his revelation as being incredible. "The arm of Yahweh," the exhibition of his saving power, has been mentioned in 51:9 and 52:10 as the agent of salvation; and the echo of the phrase here can scarcely be coincidental. This is the work of salvation; and 53:1 affirms that it is a mysterious and incredible work.

The Servant grows up without any attractive features. He is not in a position which wins honor from men. This is not due merely to the fact that he is of humble estate; the words of vs. 3 describe one who is afflicted beyond the ordinary affliction of the poor and lowly. He is one who has been touched by the wrath of God. Men avoid looking at him not only from repugnance but also from fear; it was dangerous to look upon one who lay under a curse. **The secret the prophet discloses is that the curse may not lie upon the person who suffers; it may be the curse which lies upon another and has been transferred to the person who suffers.**

His point is that the one who suffers bears pains which are not his own in the sense that they are punishments for his sins, in the theory of traditional Wisdom literature. The sufferer is innocent; and this by itself, like the Book of Job, is a declaration that simplistic explanation of suffering proposed by traditional wisdom is false.

But the Servant does not suffer fruitlessly. Because he suffers the pains of others, others are released from pain. It is here the identity of the speaker and the group he represents creates a problem. On the hypothesis that the Servant is Israel, the group whose pains he bears must be understood as the nations, as Israel would not address itself. This, however, is a violent transfer of subject and of thought.

There has been no spokesman of the nations in preceding passages; and there is nothing in the context which suggests such a spokesman has suddenly appeared here. The prophet clearly sees an innocent Israelite who rescues his fellow Israelites from suffering by bearing their suffering himself. This interpretation can claim no more than probability. The interpretation which takes the kings and Gentiles as the speakers of the entire poem seems improbable for the reasons indicated. If they are the speakers, then the first personal pronouns referring to those whose sufferings the Servant bears must indicate the Gentiles.

Verses 7–9 go beyond the idea of illness; yet in the conception of the judgment of Yahweh, it isn't impossible that the prophet then represents in figured language the judgment of Yahweh. And in fact, it seems better to take the verses in this sense; the prophet employs popular language, in which the suffering of the innocent would be called a "perverted judgment" of Yahweh.

That none “was concerned with his case” is closely paralleled in Third Isaiah (57:1). To make the suffering of the Servant more specific is to introduce problems which are insoluble; it is sufficient for the prophet’s purpose that the Servant be victim of an unjust judgment, whether this be the judgment of human courts or, in popular Israelite language, a judgment of Yahweh. In either case he bears the pains which are due to others, and by bearing them relieves them.

In vss. 5–6, the prophet recalls the idea of solidarity, admission that the righteous may suffer. If they do, then the unrighteous members of their group may be delivered from suffering because the righteous have sustained it. This was a revolutionary view, for in traditional wisdom suffering was inflicted only upon those who deserved it, the guilty. The prophet takes a higher - more realistic view of suffering; it becomes a medium of salvation to the community. Only suffering of the righteous could be such a medium, for the suffering of the unrighteous would be no more than the satisfaction of vindictive justice. But the suffering of the innocent righteous has a “plus” value in the community. The righteous must be the means of salvation for the unrighteous, for the unrighteous cannot be the means of salvation for themselves.

There is at least a difference of emphasis in Ezek 18 and 33; Ezekiel insists that both righteous and wicked shall live or die for their own deeds. He denies the principle of collective responsibility insofar as it supposes that the innocent member of a wicked group suffers guilt by association. Ezekiel does not say in so many words that the righteous cannot deliver the wicked; his interest lies in the opposite direction, in the problem of the righteous suffering with the wicked.

Verses 8–10 leave little doubt that the sufferings of the Servant ended in his death, whether by illness or by violence. That he was buried with the wicked need be no more than another figure of speech to show the low regard in which he was held. That he was counted with the unrighteous in a peculiar sense seems probable. In this view his crimes must have been great because his sufferings were great. If the legal metaphor is pursued, it means not only that the Servant bore the punishment of others, but that he was charged with their crimes.

In vs. 10 there is a sudden change of tone from mourning to exultation. In some way the Servant is delivered from both death and from the charge of guilt because he has made himself a “guilt offering.” This he has done by taking upon himself guilt of others and accepting the treatment due to the guilty. Delivery from death is a paradoxical element. The Psalms sometimes speak of delivery from the danger of death as if it were a return from death (18:4–5, 69:1–2, 88:3–6). It is difficult to understand vss. 8–9 as descriptions of the danger of death. The prophet must be expressing his faith that the saving work of the Servant cannot end in the total defeat of death.

It does not appear the prophet’s words are explained by supposing the Servant lives on in the group he has saved and their descendants. Nor does it appear that this aspect of the prophet’s vision is readily identified with some historical figure. The scope both of the Servant’s atoning suffering and his vindication go beyond any of the historical persons or events of ancient Israel known to us. Thus, **the prophet’s utterances are concerned with a saving act that lies in the future;** the saving act is often illustrated from the past, most frequently from the Exodus, but there is no past event that can be recognized here. The atonement of the Servant is a part of the future saving act.

It is by his “knowledge” that the Servant delivers many. The knowledge meant must be the knowledge mentioned in Hosea 4:1, 6. The phrase is somewhat obscure in Hosea, but it seems to mean the knowledge of Yahweh’s will in his revealed law. This sense suits the context here. The concluding lines enlarge upon the triumph of the Servant, using words and phrases that have already appeared. The Servant’s victory is described in military language in vs. 12, but this is obviously a metaphor; the Servant is certainly not a military hero. But he is one who will restore Israel as an enduring reality.²

² McKenzie, J. L. (2008). [*Second Isaiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*](#) (Vol. 20, pp. 129–136). New Haven; London: Yale University Press.

Tender shoot. Jesus would be the fresh sprout from the felled tree of Judaism. It appeared that the stump was dead (Isa. 11:1). We might have been impressed had He burst on the scene as a mighty oak or a tree in full blossom, but He appeared as a mere shoot springing up. Who would look to a tender suckling for salvation?

Parched ground. Of all the places the Lord could have chosen for the Messiah to grow up and flourish, the Lord chose Nazareth, a nondescript town in the forgotten province of Galilee. This was the area first destroyed by Assyria (2 Kings 15:29) and further decimated by invasions from other empires. It was a land of considerable Gentile corruption. It was a most unlikely place for the King of heaven to spring forth. During Jesus' ministry the Pharisees tried to argue down Nicodemus, who was mildly defending Him, by saying, "Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee" (John 7:52). They said that, notwithstanding Jonah who was from Galilee and despite a clearly messianic passage in Isaiah: "But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them" (Isa. 9:1–2). Nevertheless, the fact that people doubted if any good thing could come out of Nazareth hurt Jesus' standing with the people (consider John 1:46; 7:40–43).

No form or appearance. Jesus was bereft of regal pomp, splendor or anything else that would have wowed the world. He was born in a stable, not a palace, and was attended by humble shepherds. The remainder of His life was in line with His birth. Men generally are impressed by wealth, power, education—Jesus had none of those things. He didn't look like a king; He looked like a carpenter.

No attractiveness. Deliverers are normally dominating, forceful people who by the strength of their personality manage to draw people into following them. Not Jesus. He was beaten, scorned and shamed. Holiness and love hardly attract a world blinded by selfishness and pride. The mass of men who judge by appearance never understand Him (John 7:24). Few ever have seen His true image as appealing.

Despised and forsaken. When men see a repulsive sickness or a hideous wound they hide their face. Men avoided Jesus with the same sort of disgust. It was as if Jesus were one of the lepers that He came to heal. We may well think that we would never have rejected Jesus this way. But how would we have recognized Him? By the halo around His head? By His money? By His noble birth? By His power and popularity? Were Jesus to return as a man today do you suppose that any of us would admire Him?

Note one other poetic device that unifies the verses in this stanza. There is a repeated word in each half of each verse chapter 53: *who* (or *whom*) in verse 1; *he* in verse 2; and *despised* in verse 3. This paragraph predicts the near universal rejection of the suffering Servant of God. – Florida College Annual Lectures (1989)

Dead Savior. One of the biggest surprises in the Bible is the kind of Messiah God sent to save Israel. Jews expected a warrior. Someone like King David, only better. A leader who would free them from oppressors, restore Israel's lost glory, and even create a heaven on this earth.

“In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together... a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm... The earth will be filled with people who know the Lord” (Isaiah 11:6,8-9).

Jesus won't be that kind of Messiah. They'll get an executed rabbi on a stone slab. New Testament writers point to Isaiah 53 and say that this should have come as no surprise.

Isaiah describes the suffering and death of Jesus with such theological and historical accuracy that the words read more like history than prophecy. Yet a surviving copy of Isaiah's book, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, dates to 100 years before Jesus. There's no way it could be history passed off as prophecy.

In what many Christians have come to call the Suffering Servant passage, the Prophet Isaiah describes Jesus as a servant-minded Savior who gives his life for others:

- + **“Despised and rejected – a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.”**
- + **“Pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins... He was whipped so we could be healed.”**
- + **The Lord laid on him the sins of us all.”**
- + **“Led like a lamb to the slaughter... he did not open his mouth.”**
- + **“He had done no wrong.”**
- + **“He was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave”**
(Isaiah 53:3,5-7,9). – *The Complete Guide To The Bible*, page 188



The Fifth Gospel: The Substitutionary Atonement of Isaiah 53

Starting in [Genesis 3:15](#), the Gospel message saturates the entire Scripture. But one place the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and His substitutionary atonement is powerfully taught is Isaiah 53. Why is the book of Isaiah referred to as the fifth gospel?

Well, in Isaiah it is the divided kingdom—Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Isaiah is preaching primarily to upper class Judeans in the south. He condemns them for appearing genuine—without a high view of God or with a committed heart. **Isaiah takes 35 chapters to proclaim judgment upon Judah and other nations for their empty faith.** Assyria has already taken Israel in the north captive in 722 BC, and in chapters 36 to 39, Isaiah describes Assyria's attempt to conquer Judah in the south, which fails. Isaiah predicted it would fail, but also predicts that Judah in the future will be taken captive by Babylon.

As the second half of Isaiah begins, the prophet describes three foci—1) the coming deliverance from captivity, 2) the coming sufferings of the amazing servant of the Lord, and finally, 3) the future glory of God's people. The centerpiece, the high point, the incredible future promise in the midst of this entire book is Isaiah chapter 53, with the description of the suffering servant of the Lord, who is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah's prophecy about Christ in chapter 53, called the suffering servant, is structured so the most important focus lands at the very center of the passage.

[Isaiah 53:4](#) to 6 is the third of five stanzas of an extended prophecy. These three verses are a clear picture of the central theme, which is the innocent servant, dying as a sacrifice for sin—that also describes the heart of the Jewish religious system, the innocent animal sacrificed by dying for the guilty sinner.

Those three verses could be considered the most magnificent in the entire Old Testament. The first stanza (in chapter 52:13 to 15) describes the astonishment of the Lord's contemporaries concerning Christ's humiliation—especially the suffering He endured in his trials and crucifixion.

The second stanza (in chapter 53:1 to 3) records the beginning of repentant Israel's future confession, where they admit that they were unimpressed with how their Messiah was born, where He grew up, what He looked like, and (most of all) how He died.

This third stanza (now our text, chapter 53:4), reflects a staggering awakening—a sudden realization of why God's servant (Christ) had to suffer such humiliating agony. It's the awakening of the nation of Israel to their true Messiah. And the core truth instructing you how your sin can be completely atoned for. Notice the very first word in verse 4, "surely". Surely is a word of shocking exclamation.

Do you remember when Moses was shocked to find out that someone had seen him murder an Egyptian? He used the same word, "*Surely it is known.*" It's a combination of shock, surprise, dismay and dread—surely. [Isaiah 53:4](#) uses the expression in the same fashion. **Surely indicates a sudden recognition of something totally unexpected—a dramatic change from a previous perception, a realization that we were wrong.** And this word, surely, signals the total reversal of the saved remnant of Israel's attitude toward Jesus. It's a stunning and abrupt shock. This passage is . . .

Salvation SATURATED

These verses are just as clear as the book of Romans concerning the genuine nature of salvation. It truly is the fifth gospel, written to look ahead to the person of Christ and His substitutionary death on the cross on behalf of His children. **Whereas the other four gospels look back, Isaiah looks ahead.** But the message is the same—God saves sinners. God rescues from the greatest calamity—our sin, through the death of His Son. This passage is . . .

Biblically BREATHTAKING

Do you know what the Septuagint is? It is a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. It started with the Pentateuch in the 3rd century BC for the Jews who lived in Egypt. Then the entire 39 Old Testament books were translated into Greek from Hebrew in the 2nd century BC.

Most important of all, it was completed 200 years before the birth of Christ. This establishes the breathtaking fact that Isaiah 53 was written before Christ was born, yet the passage perfectly describes His life and sacrificial death on the cross. This shows in incredible detail that the purpose of the cross was in the mind of God and written down for us in the Old Testament ages before it happened, making this passage biblically breathtaking. This passage is also . . .

Savior SEEING

This passage describes the eternal tri-unity. The Father sending the second person of the Trinity to bear the punishment for the sins of His children. These verses describe the humiliation of Christ, His willingness to suffer in our place, the torture He experienced in bearing our sins, the loving action of God to rescue His rebellious children. The verses help us see the Savior, worship His character, and break under His loving sacrifice.

Individually IMPERATIVE

What Christ did is good news. God Himself saving you from your sins—the Father pouring out His wrath upon His own Son for the sins of His children. There are some popular authors today who say the Father did not punish the Son for sin. They undermine our justification. But friends, both Old and New Testaments say differently and clearly—God is your substitute. God took your place. God loved you so much, He died for your sin. Verse 4, Jesus was “*stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.*” The only accurate meaning of these verses is this—the servant of Yahweh dies as a substitute and sin bearer for His people, shouldering their guilt and taking the punishment that was due them.

These three verses in this middle stanza of Isaiah’s suffering servant prophecy are tied together by a common theme—the confession of sin.

#1 True converts Confess Their Sinful ATTITUDE

[Isaiah 53:4](#) begins with, “*Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.*”

Israel despised Christ, because He did not meet their expectation of what the Messiah was supposed to be like. Yet what Christ was actually doing for His people was infinitely greater than anything they had expected. The word in verse 4 translated “infirmities” is a broad term meaning sickness or calamity. Infirmities describes the sorrows and griefs of life brought about by human sin.

Isaiah is talking about the external effects our sin produces. Sin causes every kind of calamity in our lives. The point here is not merely that the Messiah shares our infirmities and our heartaches as our merciful high priest who can sympathize with our human weaknesses. The point of verse 4 is not that Jesus has compassion for all of your pains, but rather He has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases—literally borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Clearly, Jesus took our sin and all its effects on Himself, though He Himself was perfectly innocent of any and all sin. The proof of this interpretation is found in the parallel terms in verse 5. The words transgressions and iniquities make it clear that **verse 4 is not about undeserved sorrows we endure as victims. Isaiah is speaking of the anguish which always accompanies sin, starting with our guilt and ending in our death. Jesus bore all of that for His people.**

The word “borne” for our infirmities literally means *to lift or take up*. The Savior in Isaiah 53 is actively suffering because He has actively taken on Himself the full burden of His people’s sin and guilt, with all its consequences—up to and including the wages of sin, which is death. Exactly what [1 Peter 2:24](#) says, “*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.*”

In technical terms, **He fully expiated His people’s sin**—He put an end to it by death. He stood in their place and paid the penalty in full for their sin, thus carrying away their guilt and ending sin’s total mastery over them. Just like the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, when one animal became the scapegoat to make atonement. **Christ is our scapegoat, except His work is complete and permanent.**

Because Jesus was tortured, then crucified, the Jewish nation wrongly concluded He could not be the long-awaited Messiah. Verse 4 says, “Yet we accounted Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted” — therefore unfit to be the King they hoped for.

Most Jewish people rejected Jesus' messianic claims—why? They didn't think Jesus fulfilled messianic prophecies, or the qualifications for the Messiah. They did not understand His condescension to be born and to live as a man. They never understood His humility as He emptied himself by taking the form of a servant—by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. The biggest hang-up was Jesus didn't establish a kingdom, but instead was tortured and killed.

Verse 4 reflects that same kind of attitude—what do they confess? Verse 4 says, “*We accounted Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.*” Remember, Isaiah is prophetically expressing **the heartfelt remorse all genuine confessors must have when they fully accept the responsibility for their sinful rejection.** Notice the emphasis of the pronoun—we ourselves esteemed Him, accounted Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. (The Hebrew pronoun we is an intensified version of the first person plural. We expresses genuine humility and true remorse.

The implication is the Jewish people assumed Christ's public shame was fully justified. They assumed Yahweh was striking and smiting Christ because He was a blasphemer.

Struck can mean to beat, strike down, or even kill. Afflicted can mean humiliated, degraded or mistreated. All three words are connected to the preposition, “*by God*”—“*accounted Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.*” To paraphrase—they regarded Christ as a sinner stricken, smitten, and afflicted by the very hand of God.

#2 True converts Confess Their Sinful BEHAVIOR

[Isaiah 53:5](#), “*But He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the punishment that made us whole, and by His bruises we are healed.*” This second aspect of Israel's confession acknowledges that the punishment the servant suffered was actually due to be given to them for their own sinful behavior.

There's no biblical way to sidestep the punitive aspect of the suffering described in verse 5. The graphic words “wounded,” “crushed,” “chastisement,” and “wounds,” are all strong terms describing injuries that have been inflicted by punishment.

The words translated wounded and crushed are two of the strongest words in the Hebrew language to describe a violent and painful death. Wounded conveys the idea of pierced through or stabbed to death. Crushed conveys the sense of beaten in pieces, destroyed. This loving servant is crushed to death by the burden of the sins of others, which He took upon Himself, further weighted by the wrath of God due for that same sin.

Chastisement is translated correctly as punishment for committed crimes. Bruises or stripes is from a Hebrew word that speaks of welts and the raw wounds from the lashes of a whip. **All four terms describe things that happened to Jesus. He was pierced in his wrists, feet, and side. He was crushed by the beatings He endured at the hands of the Sanhedrin and the Romans. He was formally but illegally punished as the result of an unjust indictment, trial, verdict, and sentence. And He was severely marked with stripes and raw bruises as a result of the brutal scourging He received at the hands of the Romans.**

It is amazing Isaiah describes crucifixion 200 years prior to its horrible invention. Those were merely the visible wounds inflicted on him “*by the hands of lawless men.*” But we also know that Christ was, Acts 2, “*delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.*” Isaiah underscores that Christ’s death was sovereignly ordained by God as the means of atonement for sin. In verse 6, “The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. In verse 10, “*It was the will of the Lord to crush Him; He has put Him to grief*”—His soul makes offering for guilt. So, the servant was indeed, verse 4, “*stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted*”—not for his own sin, but because He took on the punishment for His people’s guilt.

Likewise, the healing spoken of in verse 5, “*with his wounds we are healed*” is not immediate physical healing. The context is all about our transgressions, our iniquities—the spiritual effects of sin, guilt, and alienation from God. Those who believe and obey are healed in the sense of being restored to spiritual wholeness and released from the bondage of sin. The verse 5 healing is more radical than the temporary healing of our bodily infirmities.

Isaiah is describing a divinely wrought miracle of spiritual resurrection. [Ephesians 2:5](#), “*When we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ*”—guaranteeing eternal life and future glorification. Christ rose to life and all His children will rise to life.

The sin sickness the prophet here has in mind here is more deeply ingrained and more malignant than the worst kind of cancer. It’s a sickness of the soul, described in verse 6. And the healing in view is a powerful remedy for the resulting enslavement to sin. So, verse 5 is an explicit confession of sinful behavior. It is also a fitting confession for anyone coming to faith in Christ, because [Romans 3:23](#), “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”

All of us are sinful, guilty of perverting and violating God’s law, and separated from God, spiritually sick—an opposition to God’s character. But Jesus took on Himself His people’s sin, guilt, grief, and sorrow. He voluntarily endured punishment for those evils. And Christ thereby purchased our permanent rescue, our everlasting peace and eternal heavenly blessing from God for us. **The death of the physician made the patient well.**

#3 True converts Confess Their Sinful CAPTURE

[Isaiah 53:6](#), “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*” This verse completes the three-part confession. The newly awakened just acknowledged their thinking about the Messiah was corrupt. They have confessed their sinful behavior, admitting that their guilt and their sins are the true cause of the servant’s suffering. In other words, **They are pleading guilty.**

Verse 6 uses a completely different metaphor, comparing the human race to sheep. Sheep are spiritually helpless, hopeless, and condemned to wander and die, unless the Great Shepherd intervenes to save us.

The fault lies in our disposition—not merely our thoughts or behavior. Wrong thinking and actions flow ultimately from a sinful disposition. True confession of sin must therefore ultimately deal with sin at its origin (the human heart), not merely in its manifestations – right?

[Jeremiah 17:9](#), “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*” Jesus declared in [Matthew 15:19](#) that “*out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*”

This is a truth every sinner, every one of you, must come to grips with. Our problem is not just a matter of how we think or what we do. **The real problem is who we are.** We are not sinners because we sin — we sin because we are sinners. The comparison to sheep for unsaved Israel and unsaved people today is a good one. Sheep cannot care for themselves.

Philip Keller writes, “**More than any class of livestock, sheep require endless attention and meticulous care. It is no accident God calls us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways... Sheep by nature are stupid animals, prone to wander off on their own and thereby place themselves in mortal danger. Sheep are defenseless against predators and can’t take care of themselves. For example, sometimes they roll over onto their backs and are unable to right themselves and that very action can lead to their death unless assisted.**”

In a similar way, people by nature are prone to go astray from God, turn to their own way, and become lost and morally capsized. And Israel’s confession in verse 6 views the entire human race as sheep who have all gone astray from the Good Shepherd. We continually spurn His guidance and care, choosing instead to follow the natural path of sin and our own ideas. Verse 4, “*We have turned everyone to his own way.*”

The good news of the Gospel is, “*the Lord has laid on [Christ] the iniquity of us all.*” The expression in verse 6, “*laid on Him,*” is translated from a Hebrew word meaning to fall on, in the sense of a violent attack. David and Solomon used this same term to describe falling upon someone to kill him. The expression literally means fell upon him with the intent to kill. The same word is used in verse 6, “*The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on*”—violently falling upon Christ to kill Him. **The guilt that belonged to us, God used to strike Christ.**

The reality of Christ’s vicarious, penal, substitutionary death on your behalf is the heart of the Gospel and is the central theme of Isaiah 53. And never forget, our sin didn’t kill Jesus – God killed His Son for our sin. The suffering servant’s death was nothing less than a punishment administered by God for sins others committed. That vicarious, penal, substitutionary atonement is meant to be shocking, be disturbing and to be overwhelming. What kind of love did it require from God to save sick sinners at such a cost? What kind of hate for sin did God have to take such drastic measures to rescue you?

Isaiah 53 teaches the same truth in [2 Corinthians 5:21](#), “*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” And [1 Peter 2:24](#), “*He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*” The servant of Yahweh, though perfectly innocent, bore the guilt of others and suffered unspeakable anguish to atone for their sins.

How do we know it is all true? The resurrection! On the cross the last words Our Savior said, “*It is finished.*” In the resurrection, Jesus proves it is all true. He is alive, He is God, He alone can forgive you at the same time, He is the one you will answer to. – *Edited Internet Resource*



"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6).

Truly He took up our infirmities

Isaiah 53:4–6

Much of the Servant's work is couched in what is called 'the prophetic perfect', a way of Hebraic writing which describes a future event as if it has already happened. We are repeatedly pressed to acknowledge the fact that the cross was not a divine afterthought, that even at the moment of our first parents' disobedience God announced His plan to bruise the Messiah's heel to free mankind from its pollution and guilt (Gen. 3:15).

The nature of messianic prophecy is progressive; each prophecy casts more light on the subject. This occurs, for example, respecting the concept of the 'seed': Messiah is to be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), through the line of Shem (9:26) and specifically through Abraham (22:18). Yet even as late as Genesis 22:18, **the 'seed' is not clearly presented as a person**, since *zarah* (seed) may indicate a singular or plural object. Still less apparent in these early stages of messianic prophecy is the nature of the 'bruising' which is to occur. Yet the idea of the Messiah being crushed for sin is implicit in the Genesis pronouncement as is the violence associated with that act. The verb *shuph* (to bruise) occurs in rabbinic commentaries describing Moses 'grinding' the golden calf until it was fine powder (Exodus 32:20). It remains for Isaiah (along with David in Psalm 22) to portray the depths of the Servant's suffering.

Matthew quotes Isaiah 53:4: 'Ours were the sicknesses He bore' (Matthew 8:17). The Hebrew language does not distinguish between the sources of illness but Isaiah says He carried our pains: He was stricken, smitten, afflicted, pierced, and crushed (53:4–5). Some Talmudic writers have recognized the likelihood that suffering is bound up with Messiah's work. Yet, these statements are atypical of the general response of Israel. Those for whom He offered Himself misunderstood His death entirely, thinking that He was 'stricken by God' for some evil He had committed (53:4). But what Jesus did was to bring us a salvation as deep and as wide as our sin.

Matthew points to Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah's messianic hope following a series of healings: a centurion's paralyzed servant, Peter's fever-ridden mother-in-law, and many who were demon-possessed. Matthew says that the Savior 'drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick' (8:16). Isaiah prophesied of a day when the eyes of the blind would be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, and the lame leap like a deer (35:5–6). This and more gave evidential support to the inbreaking of God's kingdom (Matthew 11:5), the first fruits of a coming day when weakness and decay would finally be consigned to the forgotten past. The blessings of that day are too profound for even the most sanctified minds to imagine (1 Corinthians 2:9). Of one thing we may be certain. Its underlying truth is not limited to the remote future: God intervenes—He acts—on behalf of those who habitually wait for Him (Isaiah 64:4).

Our cleansing complete

Jesus did something no self-respecting rabbi of His day would ever do: He laid His hands on the sick. Contact with the diseased drew ceremonial defilement. **It was not the task of a rabbi to heal the sick. Neither did the Levitical priest have this function. His role was that of an inspector:** he would examine an individual, once sick, when it was thought he was restored to health and able to re-enter Jewish society. (See Luke 17:14.)

The Gospel narratives reveal a Messiah who both decisively and dramatically shows that He has the cure for all that ails and destroys. **And His healing came to us by His taking the essence of our sickness to Himself.** For sin is the root of all affliction. Jesus Christ, the flawless Servant, took the very heart of our sickness upon Himself. **There is a sense in which He touched the diseased fully intending to become defiled.**

A reading of the Gospels reveals a compassionate Savior who is very much concerned with the needs of the body. Inasmuch as He is forever the same, we should not be reluctant to look to Him for relief and healing when we, ourselves, are afflicted. Yet although 'ours were the sicknesses He bore,' it is not Isaiah's intention for us to conclude that it's invariably God's will to restore the physical well-being of His people.

We know, for example, that the apostle Paul was afflicted with an ailment that God chose not to remove. Although Paul was weakened as a result, the physical hardship only made him rely upon his Savior all the more. Through that reliance he experienced God's power in a vital way. In fact, Paul even learned to delight in his weaknesses, seeing them as an indirect vehicle for the manifestation of God's strength (2 Corinthians 12:10) and opportunity for service, too, as he reminds the church: 'It was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you' (Galatians 4:13). As far as our current physical state is concerned, we must ultimately bow to the sovereign will of Him whose will is often inscrutable but who has promised that He will one day give us a new and flawless body like that of our resurrected and glorified Lord (Philippians 3:21).

The Bible presents Jesus' healing miracles not only as evidence of His compassion for our distress but also as **signs clearly affirming His Messiahship**. His miracles are never presented merely as wonders, *per se*. This is especially true in John's Gospel where the profuse healings consistently point to Christ's identity while revealing the restorative power with which the Messiah is invested.

Hebrew has several words which help explain our human failings. When David's conscience was stricken by Nathan's rebuke for the evil he had accomplished (2 Samuel 12), the king then prayed, 'Blot out my transgressions, wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin' (Ps. 51:1-2). In just one sentence David uses three words (transgression, iniquity, sin) which bring out the basic aspects of mankind's rebellion against God. They are found in an earlier psalm where David reflects upon the blessedness of knowing God's all-encompassing forgiveness: 'Blessed is he whose transgressions have been forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is he whose iniquity the Lord does not count against him.' (32:1-2).

An amazing yet logical correspondence exists between Psalm 32 and the ministry of the Servant-Messiah in Isaiah 53. 'Transgression' comes from a verb which means 'to rebel.' The word suggests the conscious defying of a known law. Isaiah says the Servant was 'pierced for our transgressions' (53:5). In other words, the Messiah gave His life for those who willfully disobeyed God. His death would be deemed sufficient to blot out the rebellious acts which we have defiantly committed against a holy God (See Numbers 15:30).

‘Sin,’ when it appears in its verbal form, means ‘to miss the way.’ It tells us that we have veered off course, that we have inaccurately sought the way of God. In his penitential psalm, sin burdened David’s heart, he confessed its offensiveness to God and sought His divine cleansing (51:2–4). David relies upon the language of atonement when he speaks of the happy one ‘whose sins are covered’ (Ps. 32:1). Covering and cleansing are the words of sacrifice drawing us to the altar where these benefits may be found. Ultimately, they draw us to Him who ‘bore the sin of many’ (Isaiah 53:12).

The Old Testament abounds with the ritual of sacrifice (Passover, Atonement Day, the Levitical injunctions) but, while preparatory to the work of the Servant, nowhere was it asserted that God, Himself, would pay the price necessary to procure man’s salvation.

The Messiah’s punishment brought to us *shalom* (53:5) in that He bore the penalty due us for failure to hit the mark of righteousness—to follow in God’s righteous ways. His ‘peace’ stands for more than tranquility; it signifies wholeness, the mending of our brokenness and the restoration of fellowship with God: ‘By the blows that cut into Him, we are healed’ (53:5).

Two weighty elements are connected with ‘iniquity’: its meaning, which suggests something twisted, and its consequence, or **element of reckoning**. Iniquity forms part of our genetic makeup (Psalm 51:5); from our earliest days the intent of our heart is basically evil (Genesis 8:21). Furthermore, this **iniquity requires an accounting; it must be laid to someone’s account**. When Stephen was being unjustly executed he prayed that God wouldn’t lay that iniquitous act to the account of his murderers (Acts 7:60). His prayer related to the matter of **imputation**.

David rejoices because his iniquity has not been imputed to him (Psalm 32:2); Isaiah is glad because ‘the LORD has caused to land on Him [the Servant] the iniquity of us all’ (Isaiah 53:6). This is consonant with David’s hope, for it is implicit that, if David isn’t to bear consequences of his misdeeds, someone else must. Note that David does not equate blessedness with performance of righteous acts; his hope is squarely rooted in grace (iniquity has not been laid to his account).

The Bible regards the work of the Servant-Messiah as a work of imputation. It is distinctive of the Messiah’s work, however, that as sinners’ deeds are laid upon Him, they, in return, receive His absolute righteousness.

Nothing taught Israel more about God's cleansing power than the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). Nothing in all of Israel's religious activities approached its significance; no ritual was as fraught with meaning. Once a year on that holiest day the High Priest would part the thick veil that separated the Temple's innermost sanctuary (The Holiest Place) from its adjacent room (The Holy Place) carrying the blood of a spotless animal. He would then sprinkle that animal's very precious blood on the Mercy Seat and seven times at the base of the Ark of the Covenant. The Mercy Seat was a rectangular slab of gold to which were attached two *cherubim* (symbolic winged creatures). The seat was the lid on top of the ark (a wood box sheathed in gold), whose contents (the Law, manna, and Aaron's rod) witnessed to God's faithful provisions and His relationship with Israel. The word, *mercy*, spoke to the issue of atonement; the *seat* spoke to the place of God's enthronement (see Pss. 80:1; 99:1).

When the High Priest entered the Holiest Place it wasn't primarily for his own benefit; he went as a representative of each and every Israelite. His responsibility was to beseech God to forgive them—to pardon their offences. In preparation for this event, the High Priest was moved to immaculate, isolated quarters a week before the great day. There he would be safeguarded from all forms of pollution that might render him unclean and unfit for priestly service. Only a clean priest could appear before the Holy One of Israel performing as the people's intercessor. To that end there were many ritual baths. The High Priest was required to bathe publicly in the presence of Israel (which he did behind a screen). According to the Talmud, he would take five complete baths during the hallowed day and would wash his hands and feet ten times.

The pressing question for all who hoped in his intercessory work was: 'Will God accept my priest's sacrifice on my behalf?' A rope was tied to the priest's leg as he entered the Holiest Place in case he had to be unceremoniously removed as a victim of God's wrath.

About two centuries following Isaiah, the prophet-priest Zechariah received a vision of a High Priest named Joshua attempting to make intercession for the nation. But to Zechariah's horror Joshua stands in the presence of God 'clothed with filthy garments'—literally, 'covered with excrement' (Zech. 3:3). And Satan (lit., 'the accuser') is there too, pointing his denouncing finger against the silent, befouled priest.

Disaster seems imminent. But then the Almighty Judge rises for the defense and says, ‘Take away the filthy clothes’ (3:4). The priest is immediately cleansed as God freely gives him what he can’t achieve for himself. **It is in that context that we are told that Joshua and his fellow priests are symbolic of a coming time when God will bring forth His Servant, the Branch (Zechariah 3:8), the same unpretentious shoot from Isaiah’s ‘stump of Jesse’ (Isaiah 11:1). What is singularly striking about Zechariah’s prophecy is God’s promise, ‘I will remove the sin of this land in a single day’ (Zechariah 3:9).** We are reminded once again that Zechariah’s word for sin (*avon*)—sin that needs to be laid to someone’s account—describes what Jesus bore in His body on the cross—‘the iniquity of us all’ (Isaiah 53:6). In that day—the day of the Servant’s self-sacrifice—all the morning and evening sacrifices along with the Day of Atonement will come to intended fulfillment.

Consider our Lord Jesus Christ. He had no washings, no isolated quarters to protect him from the world’s filth. He was unbathed, spat upon and beaten. Yet He stood before His heavenly Father clean—on our behalf. Now for each soul who believes [and obeys] the Father can say, ‘Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.’ Like Joshua in the vision of Zechariah, the old defiled garments have been forever taken away, our sin placed upon the sin-bearing Servant. We are once more transported into the new reality of Romans 8:33: ‘Who will bring any charge against us? It is God who justifies.’ Now we may ‘draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience’ (Hebrews 10:22). Moreover, God’s grace has accomplished still more for us. We have become ‘a holy priesthood’ (1 Peter 2:5) whose prayers God welcomes.

We should be careful to point out that what was transferred to the Messiah was not our moral deficiencies but the legal consequences of our sins; and what was transferred to us was not His perfect character and holiness but our Savior’s righteous standing before His Father. This reckoning of absolute righteousness to our account is a judicial act; it is not to be identified with spiritual experiences.

Again, this is all the result of grace. All becomes ours through trusting in God’s promise. God our Father never looks at us without seeing His Son in whom He is well pleased. Our standing is as secure as the Son’s—in His Father’s love.

All we like sheep ...

Messiah's blessings do not come to us irrespective of our attitude. You and I are part of the criminal element for whom He died: 'Each of us has turned to his own way' (Isaiah 53:6). We must turn away from our disobedient path and turn towards God. David's forgiveness followed his soul-searching acknowledgment of his sin. Until that time he knew only the misery of a heart weighed down by guilt (Psalm 32:3). Isaiah's message was to a people who had 'turned their backs' on God (1:4). They needed to repent, to turn from their rebellious path in the opposite direction — towards God. This about-face experience well summarizes the Hebrew idea of repentance (*shuv*) in Isaiah 55:7: '... Let him [the unrighteous] turn to the LORD ...'.

As Isaiah witnessed the shameful behavior and the spiritual indifference of his people the Spirit breathed a hopeful phrase through him: 'Yet, O LORD, You are our Father. **We are the clay, You are the potter; we are all the work of Your hand**' (64:8). God is still molding a people in accordance with His gracious will, revealing Himself to those who did not ask for Him, being found by those who did not seek Him (65:1). We worship a God who is aggressive in letting Himself be found.³



³ Sacks, S. D. (1998). [Revealing Jesus as Messiah: Identifying Isaiah's Servant of the Lord](#) (pp. 88–101). Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications.



He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He
did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to
slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before
its shearers, so He did not open His mouth
Isaiah 53:7

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter

Isaiah 53:7-9

If I had lived during the days of deliverance from Pharaoh, the ritual of the Passover lamb would doubtless have been deeply meaningful. From the tenth until the fourteenth day of the month of *Abib* (March/April), the selected lamb (a young male without blemish) would be kept at home. It was, to be sure, a time to observe, safeguard and protect its flawlessness. But at another level, it was a time to grow closer to the set apart victim. When the moment came to kill it some form of attachment would almost certainly have occurred (especially for the children). **The sacrificial lamb would have been approached more like a household pet; it is hard to imagine slaying it in the spirit of indifference. That some form of personal identity between victim and slayer was intended may be assumed by those later sacrificial ordinances requiring the worshipper to ‘press his hand upon the head of the burnt offering’ whose life he was offering up to God (Lev. 1:4).**

In this most essential of worshipful acts we find that which ‘makes propitiation’ (atonement) for sin. The animal’s death ‘covered over’ or ‘shielded’ the guilty from God’s holy wrath.

As we plumb the meaning of the Messiah’s death, it is incumbent upon us to identify with Him as the acceptable offering for our deliverance, ‘for Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed’ (1 Corinthians 5:7). God’s judgment passes over us as we lean on Jesus Christ, our willing substitute. Like the Jews on the eve of the first Passover, we are not trusting in our good deeds or prayers or anything else—only the blood of the Lamb will spare us.

There is a part of the ancient Passover liturgy which I’ve always found to be fascinating. Three matzohs or unleavened breads are wrapped in a large napkin. The leader of the service reaches in and breaks the second (center) matzoh and, while all look away, he buries (hides) the broken piece. When the third cup of wine is drunk (known as the ‘cup of blessing’) the hidden piece is revealed to the assembled company who are permitted to partake of it.

Traditional Jewish interpretation of that enigmatic event does not provide very much detail concerning its significance. Inasmuch as many first century Jews believed in Jesus, it's highly possible that the meaning of that ritual was rich in messianic symbolism. The bread itself is without leaven, a commonly used symbol for sin. Since it is the middle loaf that is broken, we may well consider the matzoh to stand for our sinless Substitute, the second member of our triune God, who was broken for us. His burial (like that of the unleavened bread) was for a short duration; He rose from among the buried on the third day. **It was the traditional third cup to which Paul referred when He said, 'Is not the cup of blessing for which we give thanks a sharing in the blood of the Messiah' (1 Corinthians 10:16)? In the Jewish ritual, the participation in the 'resurrected' piece of bread or the *aphikomeri* marks the end of the meal, after which nothing is to be eaten.** Those who have partaken of Christ have not received a poor substitute for satisfying bread, but have delighted 'in the richest of fare' (Isa. 55:2); those who love Him know His flesh and blood to be real food and drink (John 6:55).

An incredible response

Contrary to human nature, there was no murmur of resentment against those who despised Him as He endured their oppressive judgment (53:8), a miscarriage of justice unparalleled in history. If it is rightly stated that no man ever spoke like Him, it may also be said that no stillness was ever like His. **Jesus' silence before Pilate helped seal His condemnation.** But, as Charles Spurgeon was quick to note, silence is the only proper response for Him who stood in the place of sinners and was, Himself, made sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). **There is no acceptable defense for sin when we stand before the bar of God's justice,** save that of our appeal to, and reliance upon, Him who was stricken in the place of the transgressor.

Many people have suffered wrongly but none was sinless. The Messiah had done nothing wrong and never did anything deceitful come from His mouth (53:9). One might have expected Him to protest His innocence or to follow David's example where he cries out, 'strike my enemies on the jaw,' or 'Let burning coals fall upon them; may they be thrown into the fire, never to rise' (Pss. 3:7; 140:10).

The Servant sought no vengeance nor did He curse His enemies. He knew His work was with God (Isaiah 49:4) and looked solely to Him for consolation.

Peter was deeply moved by his Lord's non-retaliatory example and instructs believers to endure suffering in the same spirit (1 Peter 2:20–25). A careful review of the apostle's exhortation reveals that he is calling God's people to live righteously as a result of their spiritual healing (verse 24). They are no longer like wayward sheep. Having been returned to the Shepherd of their souls they are expected to entrust themselves to Him when they are persecuted because of their active identification with His cause.

The shepherd is a majestic figure in Israel's thinking; it is another way of referring to the Messiah's kingship. Christian unwillingness to return insult for insult testifies that we are a people belonging to the King. By joyfully following our Shepherd's lead in this most difficult area of discipleship we convincingly show the world that we are His chosen ones 'and precious to Him' (1 Peter 2:4).

The victim of a judicial murder, 'He was cut off from the land of the living' (53:8) as a young man. **Presumably, He had left no seed. How could one possibly 'speak of His descendants'? To die without progeny was itself considered a sign of God's disfavor—even a curse.** What a horrible, pitiful end for the rabbi from Nazareth—or so it seemed. He died between malefactors and so 'was assigned a grave with the wicked' (53:9). However, it is at this point that Isaiah adds an incidental, yet remarkably precise element to his prophecy: the Servant's 'assigned' place will not be his interment site; instead He will be 'with a rich man in His death' (53:9). Joseph of Arimathea's intervention (Matthew 27:57–60) served as God's initial testimony to the innocence of the crucified one. Joseph is described as a godly man who was 'waiting for the kingdom of God' (Luke 23:50–51). The mighty presence of that kingdom was soon to break forth in a way that would radically transform the lives of disciples such as Joseph. But even now, in this small and undramatic episode, we see how concerned God is with details. We may take encouragement from the fact that His direct oversight of the situation is all-inclusive.

How often we fret because many elements of our lives seem to be discordant or senseless. God has not lost track of the details; there are no non-essentials for Him; He ‘works out everything’ in conformity with the purpose of His will’ (Eph. 1:11), although from our restricted vantage point ‘His judgments are unsearchable and His paths beyond tracing out’ (Romans 11:33).

There was magnitude to the Servant’s execution which prompted Isaiah to use the plural of ‘death’ or what Bible scholars call ‘a plural of amplification’ in describing it (53:9). **How we view death largely determines how we relate to life.** Our culture’s view has been well summarized by this generation’s media-blitz insisting that we grab life zealously by the throat in order to satisfy all our desires. We pursue every type of self-satisfaction with perseverance. It is a cross-cultural attitude, embracing all socio-economic groups.

Those who believe in the Lord Jesus are imbued with the prospect of a fuller, richer life than can ever be satisfactorily described by mortal tongue.

Ancient rabbinic wisdom taught that when a man plastered his house he should leave a small space unfinished as symbolic reminder that we live in an unredeemed world (Babylonian Talmud, *Bavra Bathra*, 60b). We should pray that it might be said of us that the way we lived and loved will convincingly testify to our confidence in what ultimately awaits us. In the day when His glory is revealed, even ‘the sun will be ashamed’ (Isaiah 24:23). Now we stand, along with creation, on tiptoe, anticipating the epochal event: ‘new heavens and a new earth’ when ‘the former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind’(Isaiah 65:17).⁴

⁴ Sacks, S. D. (1998). [*Revealing Jesus as Messiah: Identifying Isaiah’s Servant of the Lord*](#) (pp. 102–110). Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications.



GOD'S EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Isaiah 53:10 *Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.*

He will see his offspring

Isaiah 53:9–12

The Servant saw beyond the sorrows and suffering of His days on earth. His vision not only concerned Himself but also envisioned a glorious future for the many who would trust in Him as their Savior. He prayed, ‘Father, I want those you have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory ...’ (John 17:24). Far from being without offspring, He would behold a vast multitude in Heaven. A promise is only as good as the person who makes it. Isaiah assures us that there is no deceitfulness (no wicked ulterior motive) at all in God’s Servant (53:9); His words are trustworthy because He is truthful.

Once when Jesus’ disciples were discouraged He told them not to let their hearts be troubled (a command) for He was going to prepare a place for them. Had there been any doubt about their future, Jesus assures them that He would not have allowed them to cling to false hope (John 14:1–2). It is in that context that the Lord speaks of Himself as the way to Heaven (14:6), making it clear that He is the route of their final exodus to God. In Him is fulfilled the promise that God ‘will swallow up death forever’ and, with tender intimacy, personally ‘wipe away the tears from all faces’ (Isaiah 25:8–9). Through Him the prospect of new heavens and a new earth isn’t a piece of pious fiction but a thoroughly believable hope.

God’s satisfaction

Although verses 10–11 may be translated in several ways, the prophet tells us that the Servant will ‘be satisfied’ and links that satisfaction to the certainty that ‘He shall see His seed.’ H. L. Ellison’s translation of the text has much to commend it:

‘He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
the will of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand.
After the travail of His soul He shall see light
and be satisfied ...’

On a parallel plane, one of the great themes of Hebrews is the work of the Messiah in bringing many sons (and daughters) to glory (Hebrews 2:10). The Servant of the Lord (Salvation's Author) perfectly accomplished His task through suffering. It was 'for the joy set before Him' that He 'endured the cross, scorning its shame' (Hebrews 12:2). We need to remember that nothing was more central to the joy He anticipated than eternal fellowship with you and me. Contemplation of that truth helps us better appreciate the intensity of His passionate concern for each of us. **He was motivated to offer Himself for sinners because He loved them enough to want to spend eternity with them; He considered this joy worth dying for.** We may rest assured that He who laid down His life for us when we were yet rebels (Romans 5:8) can be counted upon never to leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

'An offering for guilt'

How we view the Messiah's death determines our eternal destiny. Isaiah refers to it as 'a guilt (or trespass) offering' (53:10). Such an offering required the guilty to make restitution in the amount of the damage done, and to add one-fifth to the total compensation (Leviticus 5:14-19). Like virtually all Old Testament sacrifices, it was designed to bring forgiveness to those 'guilty of wrongdoing against the LORD' (Leviticus 5:19).

All sin is essentially against God (Ps. 51:4). We have defrauded the Lord of the honor that is due Him. How can we ever compensate the Almighty for the innumerable ways in which we have failed Him? In truth we cannot. But God's provision for us is more than adequate for our needs. Like the guilt offering, an additional value is attached to the Messiah's perfect sacrifice. It is sufficient to atone for our sins, 'and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 John 2:2).

When we read of it pleasing God to crush His Servant (Isaiah 53:10), we are encountering a truth which is quite beyond our powers of analysis. The whole tenor of the New Testament stands against any idea of the Father's detachment from what happened upon the cross (2 Corinthians 5:19), but there are moments when we are like the kings whose mouths are shut (Isaiah 52:15) when it comes to explaining the mystery of what was nothing less than the death of God in our place.

As a teacher exclaimed to his students: **‘God forsaking God! Who can understand it?’**

Paul prays that the Spirit of God would enable us ‘to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ’ (Ephesians 3:18) so that we might be filled with His fullness (Ephesians 3:19). We know that although Jesus saw the utter necessity of dying on the cross (as attested by all *four* Gospels) He approached the event with profound and fearful revulsion. There can be no denial that His experiences of deadly fear and desertion, as James Denney observed, are linked to His ‘taking upon Himself the burden of the world’s sin, consenting to be, and actually being, numbered with the transgressors.’

A lifetime is far too short to comprehend just what good has come to us by way of that once despised Roman gibbet, but many believe a moment spent in His glorious presence—when we will indeed be filled with His fullness—will more than compensate for our current lack of understanding.

In the fortieth chapter Israel is said to have received ‘double for all her sins’ (40:2). Does ‘double’ mean she has received twice what she deserved, either in terms of punishment or (in a positive sense) God’s blessing? The former is untenable because no act of discipline is sufficient to atone for sin; death is sin’s penalty (Ezekiel 18:20). A ‘positive’ interpretation is suggested by the fact of Israel’s blessedness as God’s ‘firstborn son’ (Exodus 4:22) and Isaiah’s promise (in keeping with that assignment) of a ‘double portion’ (61:7). As God’s children we have certainly received more than a double portion from God. In Christ, all things are ours (1 Corinthians 3:21) and the future holds blessings beyond our dreams (1 Corinthians 2:9).

There is still another way to understand what it means for God’s people to receive ‘double for all her sins’ (40:2). Dr. Allan MacRae notes that ‘double’ (*kephei*) may also be interpreted as ‘equivalent.’ This makes good sense, for Isaiah is preparing us for the revelation of the divine Servant’s sacrifice which is the equivalent, ‘counterbalancing’ provision for our sin and the many trespasses it spawns. There was no other way to satisfy Heaven’s righteous demands.

Jesus said it emphatically, **‘For I tell you, this Scripture must be fulfilled in Me, “And He was reckoned with the transgressors”; for what is written about Me has its fulfilment’** (Luke 22:37).

Since the crux of the New Covenant's promise involves both the forgiveness of sin and a personal knowledge of God it should not surprise us that both of these elements appear in verse eleven: 'By knowledge of Him shall My Servant, the righteous One, cause many to be accounted righteous.' This is a very good translation of the text because the prophet is focusing on the Servant's bearing His people's iniquities, the chief benefit of which (justification) does not become ours 'by His knowledge' but rather 'by [our] knowledge of Him.' God later said through Jeremiah, 'I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you both with knowledge and understanding' (Jeremiah 3:15). There is no doubt that the prophets came to impart knowledge and understanding. But only the Messiah is able to bring people to a knowledge of God as their Father. God yearns to be known as our Father (Jeremiah 3:19); He desires His people to say to Him, 'You, O LORD, are our Father' (Isaiah 63:16). It's a fitting conclusion to Isaiah's many verses explaining the very personal dimension of the Servant's ministry: bringing believers into an intimate relationship with God their Father. But it's not a new idea, for Isaiah's greatest *Song* already has looked forward to people seeing and understanding the Servant (52:15), receiving peace and healing through Him (53:5) and then being returned to the God from whose presence their sin before compelled them to flee (53:6; cf. 1 Pet. 2:25). As Jeremiah would say more than a century later, 'They shall all know Me [the Lord] ... for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more' (Jeremiah 31:34).

Although many of the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were genuinely interested in the Law and positively sought to bring its morality to bear upon the lives of the masses (not all Pharisees were like the self-righteous character of Luke 18:11–12), the salvation they held out to the people was based on a personal piety. Although God commands His people to obey the Law (the perfect expression of His holy nature), the work of the Servant makes it clear that all human expressions of righteousness—of total obedience—fall immeasurably short of the divine requirement. Jesus resolved to be 'obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Philippians 2:8) that He might drink to its dregs 'the unique dreadfulness' of God's wrath. Nothing more firmly establishes the unmerited nature of our salvation than the pierced and battered body of Him who was cursed in our place upon the tree (Galatians 3:10–14).

There have been those in Judaism's long history (including even some first century Pharisees) who would agree that none can expect to earn God's forgiveness, that obedience to the Law is nothing more than our response to a salvation provided by God's merciful covenant of salvation. In an ancient daily rabbinic prayer, the suppliant prays, 'Not because of our righteous acts do we lay our supplications before Thee, but because of Thine abundant mercies. What are we? What is our piety? What is our righteousness?'

However, Jesus came announcing the presence of God through His person and ministry. He represents a radical departure from the point of view maintained by the Scribes and Pharisees. For Jesus is the focal point of God's revelation. As the Source of man's redemption, He takes the place of everything the people of Israel had previously received. God, through a supernatural work of grace, makes us spiritually alive so that we not only trust in Jesus but also are positioned 'in Christ' (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3). This is more than an academic matter, for the same Savior is within us. He has befriended us, has become part of our lives, and is our hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). It is precisely because of His indwelling presence that God is able to write His law upon our 'inward parts' (Jeremiah 31:33). We are like transplanted trees, once barren and dying, taken from lifeless earth and given established rootage in the choicest soil.

Isaiah knows that a soul will not move in the right direction until he has been awakened by God's restorative power. Therefore, the cry to repent (55:7) is based upon blessing which come to sinners 'without money and without cost' (55:1). Nonetheless, the prophet repeatedly pleads with his people: 'Come to the God of grace that you might live!' He is bold in his appeal because God had said to him, 'My word will not return to Me empty, but shall accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I send it' (55:11). Some soil may produce 'thorns and thistles' (Hebrews 6:8) but an overflowing abundance will still be achieved. In the final analysis we should take comfort in the truth that the gospel is no more preached in vain than the rain which falls from Heaven (Isaiah 55:10).

The *Song* closes with the same theme with which it began, the victory of the Servant: 'He shall see light after the travail of His soul' (53:11) and He will be given 'a portion with the great' (verse 12).

Paul's message to the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch emphasized the fact that 'the holy and sure blessings promised to David' (Acts 13:34; Isaiah 55:3) were confirmed in Christ when God raised Him from the dead. The eternal covenant which has been our soul's surest hope rests upon the foundational agreement subsisting between the Father and His Son. 'God raised Him from the dead, never to see decay' (Acts 13:34) in fulfilment of the good news that 'through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything (they) could not be justified from by the law of Moses' (Acts 13:39).

Where Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus failed to achieve lasting victory, the Servant has been thoroughly successful. His kingdom will never wane but is firmly established forever. Our Conqueror has purposed to 'divide the spoils with the strong' (Isaiah 53:12); He is not like the older brother (in Luke 15) who has no intention of sharing possessions (and would feel no remorse were we to stay in our self-made pig-pens). Although all things rightly belong to Christ He doesn't behold His inheritance and then say, 'I'll not share these blessings with such undeserving people.' To the contrary, He bids us come and receive freely that we might 'go out in joy and be led forth in peace' (Isaiah 55:12). The value of what He intends to share with us is incalculable. Isaiah said, 'Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters!' (55:1). In a land where water has always been a most invaluable commodity, Jesus said, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within Him' (John 7:37-38). God had promised, 'I will pour My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants' (Isaiah 44:3).

Those who received that promise were among 'the strong' whom of Isaiah prophesied (53:12). Yet none of those who received the Holy Spirit's animating power would have considered themselves mighty. They would have reckoned themselves among the many 'whose weakness was turned to strength' (Hebrews 11:34) by the grace of God. Paul himself exemplifies the principle. God said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. 12:9). Like the apostle, we are no more than fragile 'jars of clay' (2 Cor. 4:7). But, as illustrated in Isaiah's early statements of comfort (chapter forty), it is our weakness that guarantees the success of God's plan.

A man's greatest enemy often turns out to be his strengths rather than his weaknesses. We invariably rely upon those qualities and skills we imagine ourselves to possess. The rich find it difficult to enter the kingdom of God because of their notion that money is power; and the clever think there's not any challenge too overwhelming for them to tackle.

For generations before the coming of Christ, Jerusalem's Temple had become little more than an empty shrine, its precious contents lost forever. People worshipped at a sanctuary where not even the symbols of God's transcendent glory (Ark, Law tablets, Aaron's rod, and manna) were present to console the oft-beleaguered nation.

George Bernard Shaw thought that Jesus would have been far more successful had He assumed the role of a modern practical statesmen. Yet Jesus 'rose up from the place where the kingdoms of this world shimmered before Him, where crowns flashed and banners rustled, and hosts of enthusiastic people were ready to acclaim Him, and quietly walked the way of poverty and suffering of the cross.'

In view of God's mercy we are to think of ourselves being 'living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1). Jesus poured out His life for the many whom the Father had given Him; when our thinking is right the love of God also constrains us to offer up ourselves for His children (our brothers and sisters).

It is by no means incidental that the same noun (*charis*) does double duty for the New Testament words, 'grace' and 'gratitude.' They must forever be joined together for they are as closely **linked as seed and flower.**

Paul says, 'We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body' (2 Cor. 4:10). Death precedes life; there's no way around it. God's people must live under the sign of the cross. If our heart's desire is for our spiritual vitality—for joy—we must consciously identify with Him who is the fountainhead of our lives. Wisdom reduces it to a simple formula: 'He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed' (Proverbs 11:25).⁵

⁵ Sacks, S. D. (1998). [*Revealing Jesus as Messiah: Identifying Isaiah's Servant of the Lord*](#) (pp. 111–127). Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications.



Freedom for the captives

Isaiah 61:1–2

Although, strictly speaking, these words do not constitute a Servant Song, their relevance to our study of Isaiah's 'Servant' is immediately evident, framing the essence of one of Jesus' earliest public messages. **Luke tells us it was delivered to those gathered on the Sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth. There Jesus 'stood up to read' (Luke 4:16) and was handed the scroll of Isaiah . . .**



Synagogue
Metonymy
Religious
& Social
Activity

The synagogue (from the Greek, *synagogue*, 'gathering together') seems to have come into being not long after the Babylonian destruction of the Temple. Jewish people needed to be anchored in their faith and revived, spiritually. Such were the needs that this ancient institution endeavored to meet. There were many of them scattered throughout the land; Jerusalem, itself, likely had several hundred. They were places for education and for worship; most essentially they provided a local gathering place for nourishment through the reading of the Law and Prophets. Although synagogues didn't have appointed rabbis or ministers who would expound upon biblical texts (there were no ordained 'preachers'), each synagogue apparently had a ruler who was responsible for order and for the selection of a Scripture reader. Local residents or visitors deemed to be qualified would be called upon (or might volunteer) to read from the Scriptures and comment upon them.

Jesus regularly taught in various synagogues as well as at the Temple (John 18:20) until He fell out of favor with the authorities. According to the Talmud's *Mishnah*, the prophets were read somewhat more randomly than the Law (which was read according to a *three-year cycle*). **Yet it was far from coincidental Jesus received the portion of Scripture that was handed Him, for His selection from Isaiah's sixty-first chapter offered the hearer a comprehensive overview of the Servant-Messiah's mission. He concluded His reading by saying, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' (Luke 4:21).**

Originally addressed to Babylon's Jewish captives, Isaiah's central motif set against the 'year of Yahweh's favor' (61:2) is brim-full and overflowing with the promise of freedom. 'The year of God's favor' is the year of His acceptance—the joyful expression of His good will. It hearkens back to 'the Year of Jubilee,' the year following seven Sabbath years (viz., the 50th year), when those who were servants because of unpaid debts were set free and lands returned to their former owners (Leviticus 25). It was the time for the sounding of the trumpet and the proclamation of liberty throughout the land (Leviticus 25:10). So universal is the appeal of this theme that the *Levitical text is inscribed upon America's Liberty Bell*.

Reason for eternal celebration

On the occasion of Messiah's birth a jubilant company of angels ascribe glory to God and praise Him for giving 'peace to men on whom His favor rests' (Luke 2:13–14). Jesus is the Anointed One, equipped to proclaim good news to the poor and heal the broken-hearted, whose proclamation of liberation frees His people from their prison house of sin. Best of all, He comes to make known the love of His Father—the fathomless depths of His favor.

We do not know the full content of Jesus' message to those that were gathered at the synagogue in Nazareth but we may assume, according to Isaiah's text, that He expounded upon the nature of the deliverance Isaiah promised to those bound and needy (61:1). In a later confrontation with some who had demonstrated some superficial interest in His ministry, Jesus specified His truth to be the means whereby the oppressed could be set free.

In this regard, He spoke of the necessity of persevering in His word to find true freedom (John 8:31). ‘Then,’ He said, ‘you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (verse 32). At this point it is evident those listening to Jesus had no appreciation for the gravity of their condition; they counter: ‘We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?’ (verse 33). The statement runs contrary to fact. The Jews had been slaves of the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and, even as they spoke, of the Romans. To be sure, the Romans had given their religion formal recognition, but that did not alter the fact that Israel had nothing more than a restricted autonomy. Nevertheless, Jesus’ words were not concerned with political subjugation. He was speaking at a deeper level relating to the very core of our nature. Jesus teaches as a first principle that each of us is a sinner and is held in bondage by the power of sin (8:34). Fortunately, Jesus does not leave the subject there. He immediately states that He (who brings the truth and is the truth) is uniquely able to set us free from sin’s tyranny (John 8:36).

We are always looking for life’s joys in the wrong places, desiring and exhibiting unrestrained behavior, as if that would bring genuine freedom. But disregard for life’s restrictions cannot bring freedom from fear, guilt or evil—or from just condemnation. Those alienated from God are like a churning sea (Isaiah 57:20); their ‘freedom’ is no better than chaos.

Of all the people who ever walked the face of this earth, none was as free as Jesus. As Lord He was free to exercise His authority as He chose to do so, yet for our sakes He willingly subjected Himself to every demand of the law. Jesus used His freedom to serve others; He found delight in the service of others—even after His resurrection (see John 21, where the Master cooks breakfast for His weary disciples). He never demanded His rights but found His satisfaction in knowing that His Father was pleased with Him and would ultimately provide His life’s necessities.

A Triune redemption

In Isaiah 48:16 we hear the Messiah speaking of the fact that He was sent (again, a future event couched in the past tense) by ‘the Lord God and His Spirit.’

‘Good news to the poor’

Impoverishment comes in different forms. There is the crushing physical sort which holds millions in its merciless grip. There is another devastating emptiness—a spiritual impoverishment—which is all the more severe because its awful power may not be confined to our lifetime on earth.

When John the Baptist was imprisoned because of his stand for righteousness he sent word to Jesus asking, ‘Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?’ (Luke 7:20). **John’s view of the coming one (the Messiah) anticipated a change in the world order.** However, if John had been present among the Nazarenes when Jesus read from Isaiah 61, he wouldn’t have heard Jesus quote the latter part of the second verse announcing the judgment of God. The time for evil’s judgment had not yet come; Messiah’s advent was initially an occasion for the expression of God’s grace. Thus, in answering His imprisoned colleague, Jesus instructed John’s messengers to tell him of the healings they had observed (see Isaiah 35:5–6) and to note that the good news was being preached to the poor (Luke 7:22). Isaiah’s words of impending judgment—found partial fulfilment in the fall of Israel. Yet there’s a day in Heaven’s calendar when the full measure of God’s wrath will be made manifest, when the thoughts and actions of the unrepentant and faithless will be mercilessly judged (Isaiah 2:11; 35:4; 59:17–18; 63:4).

There is an old expression in Hebrew, *mida keneged mida*. It literally means ‘measure for measure’ and refers to God’s unerring judgment in repaying good and evil in kind. Paul’s warning to the church falls within that context: ‘Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows’ (Galatians 6:7).

Blessings—for whom?

Although Jesus showed tender regard for the poor, we should bear in mind that they were not singled out simply because of their socio-economic plight. The only ‘blessed poor’ of which Scripture informs us are those who are ‘poor in spirit’ (Matthew 5:3). How one becomes ‘poor in spirit’ may be connected to his physical circumstances, but these are not haphazardly determined (Exodus 4:11).

It cannot be denied that ‘it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 19:23); but even the rich aren’t beyond the reach of a sovereign loving God (verse 26). Sometimes God shows His love for a person by taking all of his life’s artificial props away. Only then, it seems, is he able to seek Heaven’s true riches.

It is not uncommon for the Lord to lovingly afflict us in order to drive us to Himself and a renewed commitment to do His will. Drawing from his own experience, the psalmist says, ‘Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey Your word. It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn Your decrees’ (Ps. 119:67, 71).

In Search of Riches

Although ‘God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith’ (James 2:5), this truth does not undercut the fact that there are numberless poor people who have little interest in God and whose daily hope is centered in little more than the possibility that they may have bought a winning lottery ticket. Such spiritual blindness cuts across all social, ethnic, and religious groups. God must open the heart before it can receive His good news; unless He does, our minds will not seize upon His message of hope.

It is solely His undeserved favor that constrains us to believe that the Messiah left His riches in glory and became poor so we through His poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). This is more than a point of doctrine; it should help us gain an insightful understanding of what God considers most valuable. How beautifully are our Maker’s values revealed by the psalmist:

‘He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.
He determines the number of the stars
and calls them each by name’ (Psalm 147:3-4).

Even the galaxies of the universe take second place to God’s primary concern. Nothing takes precedence over the needs of the brokenhearted. There is no doubt of that for God allowed His own heart to be broken on the cross that healing may come to us—‘by His wounds we are healed’ (Isaiah 53:5).

'To preach and to proclaim'

How do you bind up an invisible heart-wound? The Book of Proverbs says, 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue' and that 'Good words can make an anxious heart glad' (18:21; 12:25). They can even bring 'healing to the bones' (16:24). But to bring release to sightless prisoners (Isaiah 61:1) the speaker must possess far more than even the most consummate verbal skills.

Those who opposed Jesus could not deny the authority bound up with His words. Once in the city of Capernaum, a paralytic was brought to Him. Jesus said to him, 'Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven' (Matthew 9:2). Some of the Scribes were critical of Jesus. How could a mere man make such an authoritative pronouncement? Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said to them, 'Which is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk?"' (verse 5). The Scribes knew that the former statement could be more easily said, for it pertained to unseen realities. On the other hand, to say 'Rise and walk' would present a formidable difficulty for the speaker's credibility couldn't escape instant evaluation. It was then that Jesus healed the crippled man and put to flight possible doubts as to the legitimacy of His proclamation. Jesus' words were those proved to be invested with divine authority. His credentials were unimpeachable.

In the Hebrew Old Testament, *dabar* may be translated either 'word' or 'deed.' In the ministry of the Messiah, His word, like that of His Father's, achieved the deed it was spoken to accomplish. (Isa. 55:10)

'Make me a captive. Lord ...'

It is as we confront the Servant's cross that we behold our Master's earthly destiny and His link to Glory. It is as we contemplate the biblical meaning of the cross that everything else occupies its proper place. There we behold **the God-Man, bleeding and dying for the seed promised Him** (Isaiah 53:10). His was the punishment by which God's peace became ours (Isaiah 53:5).

The physician in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is asked:

'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?'

In an ancient Greek myth, the mighty Hercules was given the task of cleaning the collected filth from the famous Augean stables where generations of renowned horses had been bred. He met the immense challenge by diverting a great river through the stalls.

But no mythological elements attend the feat accomplished by the Messiah when 'blood and water' flowed from His pierced side (John 19:34) in order that He might 'redeem us from all wickedness and purify for Himself a people that are His very own' (Titus 2:14).

Paul finishes his phrase with the observation that those for whom the Messiah gave His life are now 'eager to do what is good.' The tide that washes humankind clean brings renewal and reorientation. Jesus' sin-removing love is a love that beckons us: 'Follow Me.'

'Behold Me; send Me' (Isa. 6:8)

So, pressing was the call to repentance and the coming cataclysmic events that Isaiah doesn't relate his call to service until chapter six. While it is altogether supernatural, it is altogether real in time and space. Isaiah ministered during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. It is within the context of this history, while the first of these kings was still enthroned, that the prophet records his life changing experience: it was in the twelfth year of Jotham's regency with Uzziah, in the thirteenth year of Pekah of Israel (740 BC), that Isaiah saw *the Messiah*. (See John 12:41.)

His vision of God is terrifying. He trembles before a holy God. Inanimate objects shake as the *seraphim* (lit., 'burning ones') cover themselves in the presence of the Holy One of Israel. Did they behold in some cryptic form the Lamb slain from before the world's creation?

We might well say of them along with the hymnist: ‘No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight, but downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright.’ Isaiah fears for his life as he cries out, ‘A man—unclean of lips am I!’ (6:5). He is like Job, whose vision of God caused him to abhor himself (Job 42:5–6). But God does not destroy Isaiah; instead, He tells him that his sin has been atoned for (Isa. 6:7). It is because of his cleansing that Isaiah is able to offer his service to God. Before he was reconciled to God through the benefits of the altar (a word meaning ‘place of the slaughter’) Isaiah could not even enter into the seraphim’s worship of the Almighty, let alone serve Him. The prophet’s experience of God’s cleansing power immediately causes him humbly to offer his service to the God of grace.

Unforgiven sin is an obstacle to service. David prayed that God would create a clean heart within him (Psalm 51:10); then he would dedicate his energies to teaching God’s ways to other sinners (51:13). Of course, until a soul is reconciled to God there is no interest in either praising Him or serving Him. Service rises out of knowledge.

The mysterious *seraphim* (their biblical appearance is unique to Isaiah 6) fly quickly to do God’s will, all the time covering their faces and feet in self-effacement. They manifest two essential qualities of servanthood: promptness and humility.

When Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’, he knows God is calling him to a demanding and thankless task. His ministry will be similar to the Servant of the Lord’s in that the people will reject His word (Isaiah 6:9–10). But the means and the results are all in the hands of *Yahweh Shabayot*—‘of Hosts’ (6:3), a name conveying God’s absolute control over all things, seen or unseen, in heaven or on earth. Even the infinitesimal particle has no free reign in the kingdom of the Almighty. ‘In [Christ] all things hold together’ (Colossians 1:17); He sovereignly oversees all things—and He holds you together.⁶

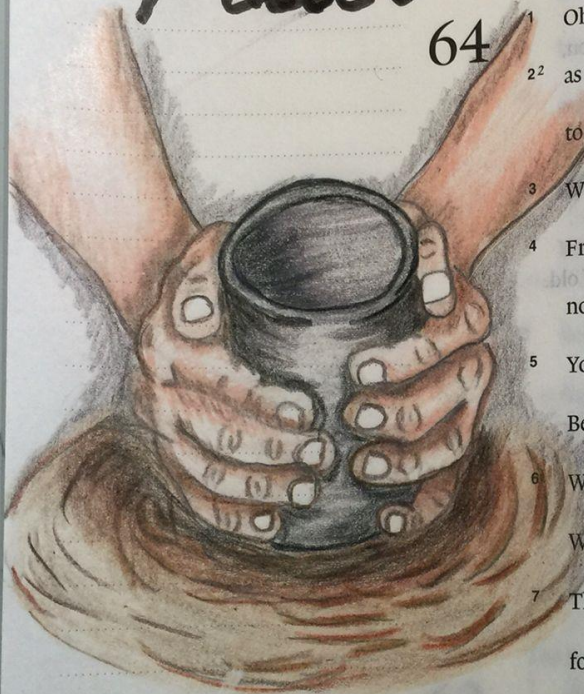
⁶ Sacks, S. D. (1998). [*Revealing Jesus as Messiah: Identifying Isaiah’s Servant of the Lord*](#) (pp. 128–145). Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications.



ISAIAH 63:17

You are
The
Potter

64



I am
The
Clay

Isaiah 64*8

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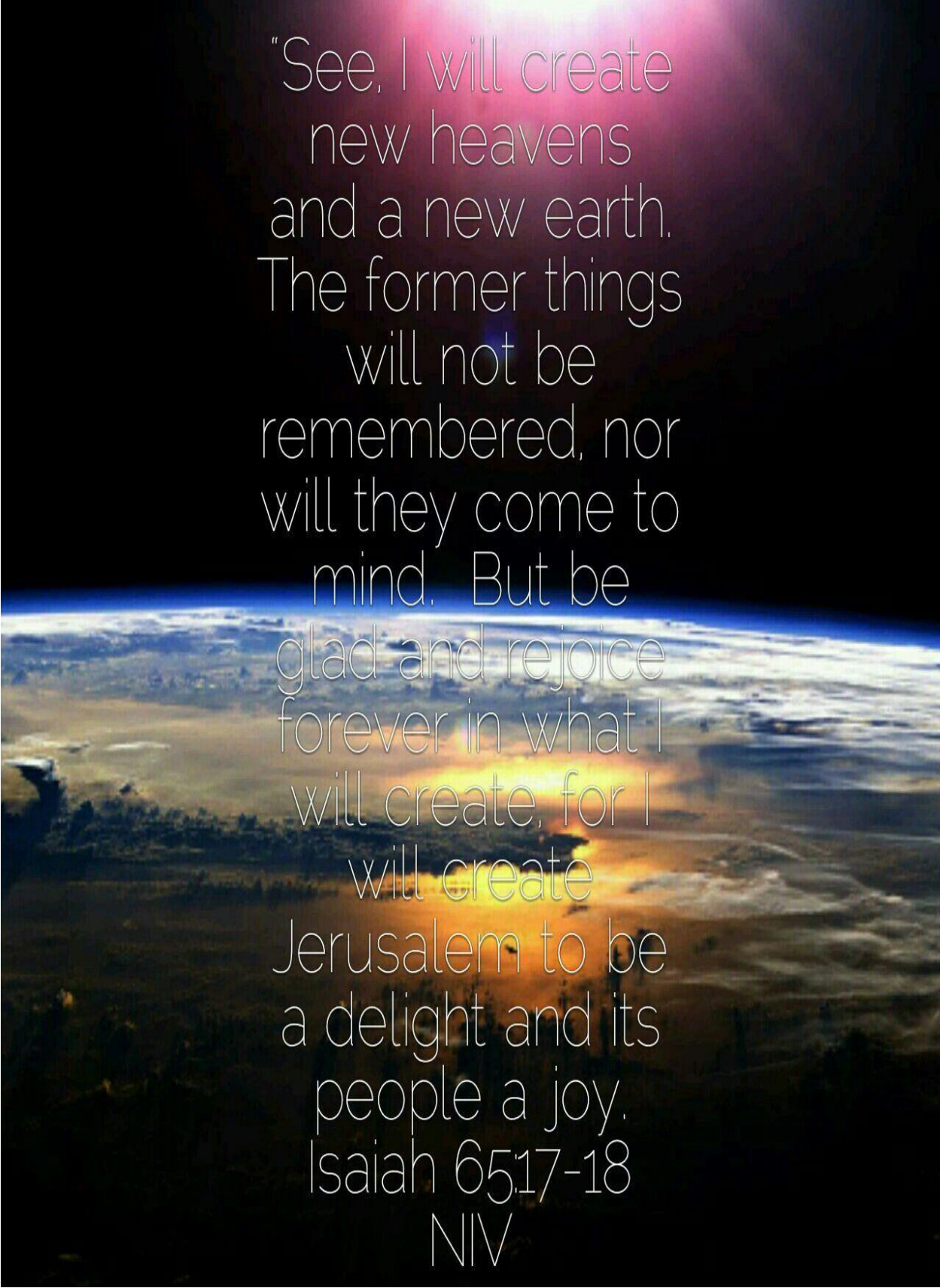
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and Israel does not acknowledge us;
you, O LORD, are our Father,
our Redeemer from of old is your name.
17 O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways
and harden our heart, so that we fear you not?
Return for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your heritage.
18 Your holy people held possession for a little while;¹
our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary.
19 We have become like those over whom you have never ruled,
like those who are not called by your name.

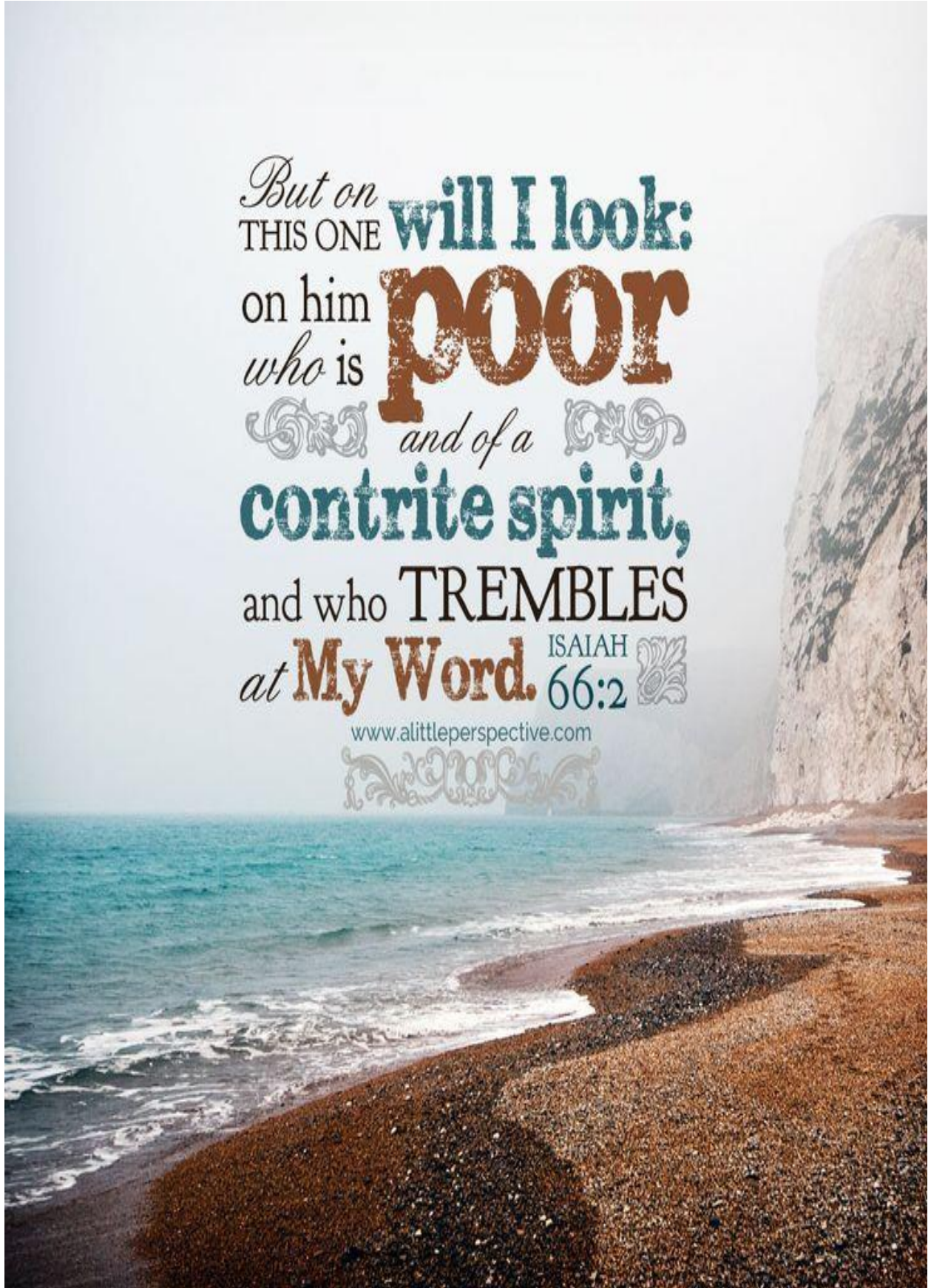
Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains might quake at your presence—
22 as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
and that the nations might tremble at your presence!
3 When you did awesome things that we did not look for,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
4 From of old no one has heard
or perceived by the ear,
no eye has seen a God besides you,
who acts for those who wait for him.
5 You meet him who joyfully works righteousness,
those who remember you in your ways.
Behold, you were angry, and we sinned;
in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?²
6 We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
7 There is no one who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have made us melt in⁴ the hand of our iniquities.

8 But now, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
9 Be not so terribly angry, O LORD,
and remember not iniquity forever.
Behold, please look, we are all your people.
10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness;
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.
11 Our holy and beautiful⁵ house,
where our fathers praised you,
has been burned by fire,
and all our pleasant places have become ruins.
12 Will you restrain yourself at these things, O LORD?
Will you keep silent, and afflict us so terribly?

¹ Or They have dispossessed your holy people for a little while ² Ch 64:1 in Hebrew ³ Or in your ways is continuance, that we might be saved ⁴ Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum have delivered us into ⁵ Or holy and glorious



"See, I will create
new heavens
and a new earth.
The former things
will not be
remembered, nor
will they come to
mind. But be
glad and rejoice
forever in what I
will create, for I
will create
Jerusalem to be
a delight and its
people a joy.
Isaiah 65:17-18
NIV



But on **will I look:**
THIS ONE
on him **poor**
who is
and of a
contrite spirit,
and who **TREMbles**
at **My Word.** ISAIAH 66:2

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In the Old Testament, it is almost as if we have a satellite picture from space of the Messiah many thousands of miles away, yet with each new prophecy, the picture continues to move nearer, until at last we are able to view a complete close-up of the Messiah—Jesus Christ. As the distinguished Hebrew scholar Charles Briggs noted: “In Jesus of Nazareth the key of the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament has been found. All its phases find their realization in His unique personality, in His unique work, and in His unique kingdom. The Messiah of prophecy appears in the Messiah of history” (1988, p. 498).

In Acts 8:26-40, Philip the evangelist approached the Ethiopian who was riding in a chariot reading the Old Testament Scriptures. As Philip approached, he heard the man reading a section from Isaiah 53 in which the sufferings of the Messiah are depicted. Upon entering into a conversation with Philip, the man asked Philip, “[O]f whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” Immediately after this question, the Bible says that Philip “opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him” (Acts 8:35).

In truth, Jesus is the sum total of every Old Testament, Messianic prophecy ever uttered. From any single one of those ancient Scriptures, the honest, informed individual could open his or her mouth and preach Jesus, the Messiah!

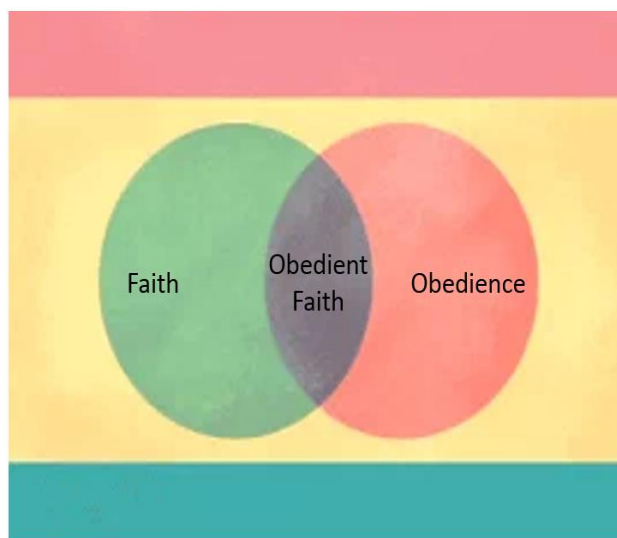
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For
Unto
us a
CHILD
is born
Unto us a Son
is given, and the
Government shall be
Upon His shoulders,
and His Name shall be called,
Wonderful, Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace!
Isaiah 9:6

AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

I an Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

When by His grace I shall look on His face, e

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

