

Isaiah Chapter 53

Verses 1-12

In these verses, we see the personal Messiah, the Son of God, who alone can atone for sin.

His message is rejected (verse 1); His person is refused (verse 2); and His mission is misunderstood (verse 3).

Nevertheless, His vicarious suffering provides atonement for our sins (verses 4-6); and though He endured suffering (verse 7); death (verse 8); and burial (verse 9), He will ultimately be exalted (verses 10-12).

To miss the fact that Jesus Christ is the central figure in this passage is to stumble in unbelief over the cornerstone and foundation of all the gospel.

The rhetorical question “Who hath believed our report?” is more of an exclamation than an interrogation.

Speaking for all the prophets, Isaiah calls attention to the world’s lack of faith in general.

“The arm of the LORD” is the emblem of divine power (51:9; 52:10).

The Servant is described as a “tender plant” (yoneq, “suckling” or “shoot”), and “a root out of a dry ground,” which has already been described as springing from the stump of Jesse (hence the Davidic line).

“No form nor comeliness” denotes His humble origin rather than His personal appearance.

“Beauty” may be read “elegance.”

This description does not mean that He will be homely or ugly, but that He will not appear on the scene in the regalia of a king.

He will come as one who is common.

Nothing could better describe the humble appearance of Jesus as a common rabbi.

Isaiah 53:1 "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"

“Who hath believed our report”:

The question implied that, in spite of these and other prophecies, only a few would recognize the Servant when He appeared.

This anticipation found literal fulfillment at Christ's first advent.

Israel did not welcome Him at His first advent (John 1:9-11; 12:38).

Paul applied the same prophecy to the world at large (Romans 10:16).

"The arm of the LORD":

At His first coming, the nation did not recognize the mighty, incarnate power of God in the person of Jesus, their Deliverer.

Isaiah is saying that not anyone, or at least just a handful, have believed the prophecy that God had given him for this people.

When he asks the question, he is saying, show me one who believes what I have prophesied through words of God flowing through me.

The "Arm of the LORD" is speaking of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah is telling them of the coming of their long awaited Messiah.

Isaiah 53:2 "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."

"Before him":

Though unrecognized by the world (verse 1), Messiah Jesus was observed carefully by God, who ordered every minute circumstance of His life.

"Dry ground ... there is no beauty that we should desire him":

The Servant will arise in lowly conditions and wear none of the usual emblems of royalty, making His true identity visible only to the discerning eye of faith.

Speaking of Jesus coming from a "tender plant", shows that His appearance on this earth would be in the form of a baby.

He would grow to manhood, as other children do.

Isaiah speaks of this as if it has already happened, because it was planned from the foundation of the world.

This tree springs from a root in the ground.

Jesus is the "Tree of Life".

He is also, the Branch.

This tree springs from a seemingly dead root.

Jesus was not of the Levitical tribe, which the earthly priests came from.

He was from the tribe of Judah.

Romans 15:12 "And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust."

This is that root.

As we said in the last lesson, He was not unusually handsome physically.

In the physical, He looked like most of the men of His times.

People did not flow to Jesus because of His flesh, but because of the Spirit within that flesh.

Some historians say He was a tall slender man, a little hump-shouldered with light sandy red hair and blue eyes.

No one knows for sure.

We should not look at Him with our physical eyes anyhow; we should see the Spirit Man within the body.

Verses 3-5

To provide a detailed description of His suffering, the prophet uses a series of verbs with an assumed subject (the Servant).

"Despised" (bazah, "to disdain or scorn"), and "rejected" (chadal, "abandoned"), "of men."

He is further described as a "man of sorrows" (Mak obot, "severe pains"), and "acquainted with grief" (choli, "injuries").

Because of His severe personal suffering "we hid as it were, our faces from him".

The description of Christ's suffering in the New Testament Gospels clearly indicated the severity of His physical suffering.

The agony in the garden, His battered face, the severe scourging, and the torture of the crucifixion itself.

His substitutionary atonement is clearly taught.

“He hath borne our griefs” (literally, “spiritual sickness”).

The New Testament says that He Himself “bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (see 1 Peter 2:24).

Thus, He was “stricken, smitten,” and “afflicted.”

“We” (mankind in general), thought He was judged “of God.”

But “he was wounded” (or “pierced through”), “for our transgressions” (sins).

The verb “bruised” translates daka, meaning “to be utterly crushed.”

“Our iniquities” (awon), means moral “evils”.

“Chastisement” (musar, “correction” or “discipline”), “of our peace” refers to that which procured our peace with God.

“With His stripes” (or “wounds”), “we are healed” (rapa, to “mend” or “cure”), refers to our spiritual condition being made whole.

In Isaiah, the term is always used for spiritual healing and forgiveness (see 19:22 and 57:18).

Isaiah 53:3 "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."

“Despised ... rejected ... despised”:

The prophet foresees the hatred and rejection by mankind toward the Messiah/Servant, who suffered not only external abuse, but also internal grief over the lack of acceptance from those He came to save (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34).

“Hid as it were our faces ... we esteemed him not”:

By using the first person, the prophet spoke for his unbelieving nation’s aversion to a crucified Messiah and their lack of respect for the incarnate Son of God.

The Jewish leaders rejected Him.

Even His sisters and brothers did not believe He was Messiah, until after He rose from the grave.

Simon Peter denied Him 3 times in the face of the crucifixion.

Very few of His followers were with Him at Calvary.

The disciples fled, except for John, to whom He had entrusted His mother, and Peter watching from afar.

The women stayed and were with Him at His worst hour.

Even people today, who want to live worldly lives, do not believe in Him.

Isaiah 53:4 "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

“Borne ... carried”:

Even though the verbs are past tense, they predict happenings future to Isaiah’s time, i.e. “prophetic perfects” in Hebrew here and elsewhere in the Servant-song.

Isaiah was saying that the Messiah would bear the consequences of the sins of men, namely the griefs and sorrows of life, and though incredibly the Jews who watched Him die thought He was being punished by God for His own sins.

Matthew found an analogical fulfillment of these words in Jesus’ healing ministry because sickness results from sin for which the Servant paid with His life (verses 7-8; 1 Peter 2:24).

In eternity, all sickness will be removed, so ultimately it is included in the benefits of the atonement.

There is a song that says, "I should have been crucified".

This is the true story of it all.

It was our sin that nailed Him to the cross.

We know the Jews and the Romans were immediately responsible, but truly, we all nailed Him to the cross.

He was the Substitute for our sin.

Not even the apostles, who had walked and lived with Him every day, understood the significance of the cross.

They thought Jesus had been defeated, and they fled.

One of the thieves hanging with Him said, “If you are the Son of God”.

He did not believe, either.

The thief on the right recognized Jesus for who He was, and asked forgiveness.

Jesus told him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise".

The world thought Jesus was defeated at the cross, when in fact, it was His greatest victory.

He did say, "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me"?

This statement was when Jesus had the sin of the world on His body.

The face of God was turned away from the sin, not from His precious Son.

The high priest, and others in authority, accused Him of blaspheming God.

John 5:18 "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

Little did they know that Jesus was actually paying the price in full for the sin of the whole world.

Isaiah 53:5 "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."

"Wounded for our transgressions ... bruised for our iniquities":

This verse is filled with the language of substitution.

The Servant suffered not for His own sin, since He was sinless (Heb. 4:15; 7:26), but as the substitute for sinners.

The emphasis here is on Christ being the substitute recipient of God's wrath on sinners 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:3-4; Hebrews 10:9-10.

"Chastisement of our peace":

He suffered the chastisement of God in order to procure our peace with God.

"With his stripes we are healed":

The stripe (the Hebrew noun is singular), that caused His death has brought salvation to those for whose sins He died (Peter confirms this in 1 Peter 2:24).

Sin must be paid for by the shedding of blood.

Hebrews 9:22 "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

Jesus shed His blood to pay for our sin.

He took our sin upon His body on the cross, and in exchange gave us a robe of righteousness to wear.

The wounds, of course, are the nails driven into His body.

They whipped Him, until the flesh was much damaged.

It was this whipping He took that paid for our healing.

The stripes on His body paid for our healing.

We had no peace, until the King of Peace (Jesus Christ), gave it to us as a gift.

Man had been away from God.

Jesus tore down the veil of the temple, which kept the people away from God.

The "temple veil", symbolized the flesh of Jesus.

Jesus opened the way to the Father for each of us.

Mark 15:38 "And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

He brought us access to the Father through the use of His name.

Verses 6-7

"All we" ("literally all of us"), are compared to "sheep ... gone astray" to illustrate the desperate condition of mankind, lost, without a Shepherd (Matt. 9:36).

"All" and "every" are used in parallel, emphasizing the totality of sinful humanity.

"Laid on him":

This is a causative verb meaning "to strike violently."

Thus Christ propitiates the violent wrath of God for us.

The fact that He opened not His mouth is illustrated by a “lamb” being brought to “the slaughter” (see John 1:29 and Revelation 5:6, 12).

Isaiah 53:6 "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."

“All ... we have ... us all”:

Every person has sinned (Romans 3:9, 23), but the Servant has sufficiently shouldered the consequences of sin and the righteous wrath deserved by sinners (1 Tim 2:5-6; 4:10; 1 John 2:2).

The manner in which God laid our iniquity on Him was that God treated Him as if He had committed every sin ever committed by every person who would ever believe, though He was perfectly innocent of any sin.

God did so to Him, so that wrath being spent and justice satisfied, God could then give to the account of sinners who believe, the righteousness of Christ, treating them as if they had done only the righteous acts of Christ.

In both cases, this is substitution.

Jesus is the great Shepherd, and we Christians are His sheep.

This is speaking of all mankind, because Jesus is the Savior of all the people of the earth, not just the Hebrews.

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Just as the first Adam brought sin unto the lives of every individual, Jesus brought righteousness.

Romans 5:15 "But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift.

For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

Titus 2:14 "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Verses 7-8

This is the portion of Scripture read by the Ethiopian eunuch and subsequently explained to him by Philip as referring to Jesus (Acts 8:32-33).

Isaiah 53:7 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

“Openeth not his mouth”:

The Servant will utter no protest and will be utterly submissive to those who oppress Him.

Jesus fulfilled this.

“Lamb to the slaughter”:

The Servant was to assume the role of a sacrificial lamb (Exodus 12:3, 6).

Jesus fulfilled this figurative role literally (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18; Rev. 5:6).

This is fulfilled, when Jesus did not answer back His accusers.

He, of His own free will, was crucified.

No one forced Him to do this.

He was fulfilling the law.

Verses 8-9

“He was taken from prison and from judgment”:

Justice, refers to the illegitimate trials to which Jesus was subjected.

“Who shall declare”:

Reads better “who has considered.”

“His generation”:

Refers to His potential life.

The verb “was cut off” refers here to a violent death.

The reference to the Servant making “his grave with the wicked” was certainly fulfilled in Christ’s crucifixion between two thieves (see Matt. 27:38).

The additional phrase “and with the rich in his death” refers to Jesus’ burial in the tomb of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57).

Isaiah 53:8 "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

“Cut off ... for the transgression of my people”:

The Servant lost His life to be the substitute object of wrath in the place of the Jews, who by that substitution will receive salvation and the righteousness of God imputed to them.

Similar terminology applies to the Messiah (in Dan. 9:26).

He was tried during the night.

He was judged of the leaders of the temple and of Herod and Pilate.

Pilate and Herod wanted nothing to do with Him, and tried to get Him released.

The leaders of the temple insisted that He be crucified.

Matthew 27:25 "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood [be] on us, and on our children."

His life on this earth was very short, but He lives on in the hearts of His followers, the Christians.

If we belong to Christ, He dwells within us.

He is omnipresent, so while He is in our hearts, He is also, seated at the Right Hand of the Father.

Isaiah 53:9 "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither [was any] deceit in his mouth."

“With the wicked ... with the rich”:

Because of His disgraceful death, the Jews intended the Servant to have a disgraceful burial along with the thieves (John 19:31), but instead He was buried in “a rich man's tomb” in an honorable burial through the donated tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-40).

“No violence ... deceit”:

The servant’s innocence meant that His execution was totally undeserved. Peter notes the fulfillment of this (in 1 Pet. 2:22).

There are two things referred to here.

He was crucified between two thieves.

The reference to being with the rich in His death has to do with Joseph of Arimathea, who came and got Jesus' body, and buried it in His own grave.

It belonged to a rich man but had never been used.

John 19:38 "And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave [him] leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

"Because" in the verse above could have been better translated "although".

He had no sin.

He gave His body on the cross for the sin of others.

Verses 10-12

"it pleased the Lord to bruise" (daka, "to crush") "him", refers to the same condition (in verse 5).

"His seed" refers to those who will come to believe in Him.

"An offering for sin" (asham, "guilt offering") involves the trespass offering described (in Numbers 5:5-10).

The phrase "he shall prolong his days" indicates that the Servant's ministry will not end with His violent death, and which will be accomplished by the atoning death and resurrection of the Servant.

The chapter ends with the glorification and exaltation of the Servant of the LORD.

His "intercession" refers to His high priestly ministry, by which He makes intercession on the basis of His own substitutionary death.

Isaiah 53:10 "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong [his] days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."

"It pleased the LORD": Though the Servant did not deserve to die, it was the LORD's will for Him to do so (Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:42; John 12:27; Acts 2:23).

“An offering for sin”: Fulfilled by the Servant as the lamb of God (verse 7; John 1:29). Christ is the Christian’s Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). This conclusively eliminates the error that Christ’s atonement provides present day healing for those who pray in faith. His death was an atonement for sin, not sickness.

The crucifixion of Jesus had been planned as the salvation of mankind from the beginning. Even the Jews believed that One should die for all. Look with me, at the Scripture which covers this.

“His seed ... prolong his days”:

To see His offspring, the Servant must rise from the dead.

He will do this and live to reign forever (2 Sam. 7:13, 16; Psalms 21:4; 89:4; 132:12).

John 11:50 "Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

Jesus was the perfect Lamb sacrifice that took away the sin of the whole world.

John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Hebrews 9:26 "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Look with me, at one more Scripture that shows animal blood could not do away with sin.

It had to be the blood of the Son of God.

Hebrews 10:4 "For [it is] not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

You see, it is the precious blood of Jesus Christ (the “perfect Lamb” which saves us).

Romans 5:9 "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The thing that kept Jesus on the cross was us.

When He was on the cross, we were on His mind.

Isaiah 53:11 "He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

“He shall ... be satisfied”:

The one sacrifice of the Servant will provide complete satisfaction in settling the sin issue (1 John 2:2; CF. 1:11).

“By his knowledge”:

The Servant knew exactly what needed to be done to solve the sin problem.

“Justify many”:

Through the divine “knowledge” of how to justify sinners, the plan was accomplished that by His one sacrifice He declared many righteous before God (Romans 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The birth of the Christians was a painful thing for Jesus.

He suffered on the cross.

We Christians, are just as if we had never sinned (justified), in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1:10 "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:"

Through the knowledge of the good news of the gospel, the Christian has hope of eternal life.

Isaiah 53:12 "Therefore will I divide him [a portion] with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

“Portion with the great ... divide the spoil”:

The Servant’s reward for His work will be to enjoy the “booty” of His spiritual victories during His millennial reign.

“Numbered with the transgressors”:

The Servant assumes a role among sinful human beings, fulfilled by Jesus when He was crucified between two criminals (Luke 22:37).

“Made intercession for the transgressors”:

This speaks of the office of the intercessory High-Priest, which began on the cross (Luke 23:34), and continues in heaven (Heb. 7:25; 9:24).

It is a wonderful thing to realize just what Jesus did, when He put us in right standing with God.

He is heir to all in the heavens and in the earth.

The great thing is, He has made us the adopted sons of the Father.

He bought us with His blood.

He made us joint-heirs with Him.

He is our Benefactor.

Romans 8:14-17

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:"

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together."

Jesus, not only purchased us for the Father with His blood, but is constantly pleading our case before the throne.

The devil is our accuser, Jesus is our intercessor.

1 John 2:1 "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"

Isaiah Chapter 53 Questions

1. What is Isaiah saying, when he says, who hath believed our report?
2. The "Arm of the LORD" is speaking of what?
3. Isaiah is telling them of the coming of whom?
4. What does the "tender plant" tell us about Jesus?
5. _____ is the Tree of Life.
6. Jesus was from the tribe of _____.

7. How do some historians describe the flesh of Jesus?
8. Who rejected Jesus?
9. How many times did Peter deny Jesus?
10. Jesus entrusted His mother to _____.
11. Who stayed with Him during His worst hour?
12. Who should really have been crucified?
13. Why did the apostles flee?
14. He was wounded for our _____.
15. By His _____ we are healed.
16. What did the "veil" in the temple symbolize?
17. Who sinned and needed a Savior?
18. What does verse 7 tell us Jesus had to say?
19. When was Jesus' trial?
20. If we belong to Christ, He dwells _____.
21. Where else is Jesus?
22. Who claimed the body of Jesus?
23. Why was he secret about being a disciple of Jesus?
24. When was the crucifixion of Jesus planned?
25. What did John call Jesus in chapter 1 of John?
26. What justifies the Christian?
27. We, Christians, have been adopted, and we are _____ of _____.
28. Who is our Advocate with the Father?