

The last time I taught this class, we looked at Luke 24 where Jesus, after He was risen, gave two of His disciples a personal bible study in the OT while walking down the road to Emmaus.

- His disciples were confused because they believed Jesus was the Messiah, but they didn't understand how the Messiah could have been killed.

*Luke 24:25-27 He (Jesus) said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" <sup>27</sup>And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

Today we're going to focus on one OT prophecy that, more than any other scripture, portrays the life, ministry & suffering of Jesus the Messiah- Isaiah 53.

- Isaiah 53 has been called, The Gospel According To God.
  - It is truly the first gospel, but it was written 700 years before Jesus was born.
  - Isaiah 53 not only tells of His life, but also His death for our sins & His resurrection from the dead.
- This prophecy begins in Isaiah 52:13; I believe the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter should have begun there.
  - So, to make things easier for this study, we'll simply call all of it Isaiah 53.

Historically Jewish scholars had always taught this passage as being Messianic, however they were confused by the idea of two Messiahs; one suffering & one conquering.

- There are eight times more OT prophecies of Jesus second coming in power than His first coming as a servant, & that's why they didn't recognize Him as Messiah.
- But, Isaiah 53 paints such a clear picture of Jesus & His death that the first century Church made it well known that this is about Jesus & He will come again a second time to rule.
- So then, Jewish scholars, in an effort to cover their crime of crucifying Jesus, revised their teaching of Isaiah 53 & began teaching that Israel is the suffering servant being described.
  - Today this corrupted view is still the most common interpretation taught by rabbi's.
  - Consequently, today Isaiah 53 is almost never read in Jewish synagogues because of it's obvious connection to Jesus.
  - A saved Jewish evangelist who was recently preaching on the streets of Jerusalem, read Isaiah 53 to the Jews there & many of them had never heard it before.

While Isaiah 53 is clearly talking about The Messiah, notice that the verbs are in the past tense.

*He was despised and rejected by men*

*He has borne our griefs*

*we hid, as it were, our faces from Him*

*He was oppressed and He was afflicted*

*He was despised, and we did not esteem Him*

*He was led as a lamb to the slaughter*

- How can it be a prophetic passage of the future if the verbs are in the past tense?
- It's helpful to know that Isaiah 53, which was written 700 years before Jesus was born, is prophetic of someone, still in our future, looking back at the suffering Messiah.
- And, it's not just one person looking back because the pronouns are plural, **we** & **our**.
- I believe Isaiah 53 is the confession of the Jewish nation when they finally understand that they rejected & killed their own Messiah, & furthermore, His death paid for their sins.

As I see it, Isaiah 53 can be divided into 5 sections:

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|--|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1- <i>The Father exalts His Servant (Jesus)</i>        | 52:13-15  |                       |
| 2- <i>Future Jews give excuses for rejecting Jesus</i> | 53:1-3    |                       |
| 3- <i>Future Jews confession of faith in Jesus</i>     | 53:4-6    |                       |
| 4- <i>The Holy Spirit describes Jesus' sacrifice</i>   | 53:7-11a  |                       |
| 5- <i>The Father declares Jesus victorious</i>         | 53:11b-12 | <i>Read Isaiah 53</i> |
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**1- The Father exalts His Servant (Jesus)**

*Isa 52:13 Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.*

- The Jews teach that they are the servant described in Isaiah 53, not the Messiah.
- Isaiah has many passages that clearly call Israel God's servant, but they were an unfaithful servant, & they are not the one who is being referred to here.

In Isaiah 41:8 God calls Israel His servant:

*But you Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen ...*

However Israel was not a faithful servant, but they rejected & abandoned God:

*Isa 41:28 For I looked, and there was no man; I looked among them, but there was no counselor, who, when I asked of them, could answer a word. <sup>29</sup>Indeed they are all worthless; Their works are nothing; Their molded images are wind and confusion.*

*Isa 42:24 For they would not walk in His ways, Nor were they obedient to His law.*

*Isa 43:22–23 But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel. <sup>23</sup>You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me...*

But to Jesus, the Faithful Servant, God says:

*Isa 42:1–3 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. <sup>2</sup>He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. <sup>3</sup>A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.*

*Isa 49:5–6 And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him So that Israel is gathered to Him; For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength. <sup>6</sup>Indeed He says, It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant, To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.*

- Clearly there's a difference between Israel- God's unfaithful servant, & Jesus- His faithful servant & Messiah.

*Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently: He shall prosper, be smart, be successful in His ministry.*

- This is an odd statement; Why would God have Isaiah prophesy the Messiahs success?
  - Because everyone thought Jesus had been killed before He accomplished His mission.

*Luke 24:17–21 And Jesus said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" <sup>18</sup>Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" <sup>19</sup>And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup>and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. <sup>21</sup>But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel ...*

- God is stating beforehand that Jesus' death was His mission, & that He successfully stood in our place before God's judgment seat, taking our due punishment on Himself.

*Isaiah 52:14* Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men;

- This wording is difficult to understand; One possible understanding might be worded:  
*Many were astonished at Him; And because of His wounds He no longer appeared human.*
- His tortures were so brutal He no longer looked human; (movies can't portray the sight).

*Isaiah 50:6* I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

*Psalms 22:14* I am poured out like water and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.

- Satan hates Jesus & believed He was the Messiah, the one prophesied to free Israel from Roman oppression & to rule Israel & the world from David's throne.
- He thought that killing Jesus would spoil God's plan, leaving him as the god of this world.

*1 Cor 2:7-9* But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, <sup>8</sup>which none of the rulers of this age knew; **for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.** (Also see: *Isa 43:19* & *Jer 31:31-34*)

- Satan had no idea that Jesus' death would be the all sufficient final sacrifice under The Law, freeing all those who believe from his dominion.

*Col 2:14-15* having wiped out the certificate of debt that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

- Satan was shocked & humiliated by Jesus' resurrection from the dead, & that He had reclaimed all the authority Adam had yielded to Satan at the fall; Gen 3.

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*Isaiah 52:15* So shall He startle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.

- Many translations use the word *sprinkle* here instead of *startle* because like most languages some words have more than one meaning, & the context determines which is correct.
- When the world sees Jesus at His return they will be shocked at His appearance because most of them had no idea of the abuse He suffered for them.

*Rev 5:6* And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood **a Lamb as though it had been slain** ...

- When the world finally sees Jesus at His second coming, His disfigurement will be shocking.
- That being said, I believe the real shock will be His power; the majesty, & the awesome presence of Jesus; King of Kings & Lord of lords.
- The unbelieving world will tremble & fall on their faces in terror because they rejected Him.

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## **2- Future Jews state their excuses for rejecting Jesus**

*Isaiah 53:1* Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

- This verse asks two rhetorical questions to explain that Jesus' claim was difficult to believe.

*1- Who has believed our report?*

- A better translation would be; *Who has believed what was reported to us?*
- Even at the end of His ministry, most Jews refused to believe Jesus was the Messiah.

*John 12:37* Although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him ...

2- *And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

- *The arm of the Lord* refers to God's power & strength.
- Keep in mind that the Jews were expecting a powerful military conqueror, a strong Messiah that would deliver them from the oppression of Rome.
- Because Jesus came from a poor background with no education or training most Jews assumed Jesus could not be their Messiah.

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*Isaiah 53:2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.*

- *He shall grow up as a tender plant;* Just a normal person, not someone with wealth & power.
- *As a root out of dry ground;* An unsightly unproductive root that people trip over; usually something that's cut out & thrown away.
- *He has no form (stately appearance), or comeliness (splendor or beauty);* Jesus wasn't dressed in royal garments & gold, nor did He live in an expensive estate surrounded by servants.
- *There is no beauty that we should desire Him;* Jesus was not some good looking Hollywood type that everyone is naturally drawn to.
- Jesus did not appear special, He was an average looking man; He was just like you & me.

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*Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not consider Him.*

I believe this passage partially refers to the rejection & grief Jesus experienced thru His whole life.

- Remember, Jesus was born before His mother & father were married, & as an illegitimate son in that society, He would have been treated badly by those He grew up with.
- Parts of Psalm 69 give us a look at His early years of growing up with that shame.

*Read Psalm 69:6-20*

- These pleas to God are for being illegitimate in a small town where people talk & judge harshly.
  - Years later, at His trial & execution He did not ask God for deliverance, but instead He endured it all for us; (next week we'll read psalm 88).
- As Jesus began His ministry people were amazed at His teaching & miracles, however the Jewish leaders despised the popularity of Jesus & constantly harassed Him.
- But at the end, neither the Jewish leaders nor most of the public ever really believed that this illegitimate carpenter from Nazareth could truly be the Messiah they were expecting.

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To me, these first three verses of Isaiah 53 sound like the Jews are making excuses to God as to why they didn't believe in Jesus.

- Below I've rephrased these first three verses using today's language to help us better understand what they are saying.

*Isaiah 53:1-3 Who has believed what was reported to us? Who could see the might of the LORD in Him? <sup>2</sup>He grew up before us like no one special, like a fragile plant: and like a dry root sticking out of the ground He was not good looking or powerful, and when we look at Him He doesn't appear to be someone worth knowing. <sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, so we turned our faces from Him. He was despised by our leaders so we never considered that He could be our Messiah.*

Next week we'll begin with verse 4; Israel's heartfelt prayer of repentance & confession of belief in Jesus, their Messiah.