

The Suffering and Glory of **God's Servant**

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

Chapter 1

Introduction

Isaiah chapter 53 is one of the most wonderful and precious chapters in the entire Bible. Martin Luther, the great reformer, said that it ought to be written on parchment of gold and lettered in diamonds. It has been referred to as the "golden passion of the Old Testament" and the "holy of holies of Isaiah." Nowhere in the Old Testament does the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ shine more brilliantly than in Isaiah 53. The Puritan commentator Matthew Henry has made the observation, "This chapter is so replenished with the unsearchable riches of Christ that it may be called rather the gospel of the evangelist Isaiah than the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah." Here we have the most lengthy, full, and rich instruction in the entire Bible on the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. It is almost as if Isaiah were transported in time 750 years into the future to see with his own eyes the abuse, rejection, and humiliation of our Lord. It's as though he were standing among the rabble of people on Golgotha and taking notes of exactly what happened. Thomas Manton, another puritan pastor, has stated, "Isaiah 53 may rather be called the gospel than the prophecy of Isaiah. It contains so ample and clear a discovery of Jesus Christ, that one would rather account it historical than prophetic. Other prophecies are explained by the history of Christ in the New Testament, but this prophecy explains the history."

It would seem that the apostles of Jesus Christ understood the significance of this chapter in Isaiah, for every verse except for verse two is picked up and applied to Jesus Christ somewhere in the New Testament, some verses several times. Jesus applied Isaiah 53:12 to himself in Luke 22:37. Matthew applied Isaiah 53:4 to the healing ministry of Christ (Mt. 8:16-17), and Peter made allusions to Isaiah 53:5-9 in 1 Peter 2:21-25. Moreover, Isaiah 53:7-8 was the very text the Holy Spirit made use of in converting the Ethiopian Eunuch through the ministry of Philip (Acts 8:26-40).

The central theme of Isaiah 53 is the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Christ's substitutionary sin-bearing work on behalf of His people shines clearly and unmistakably throughout the entire passage. It should not surprise us that such a magnificent portion of Scripture has the cross of Jesus Christ as its focal point, for indeed, the centerpiece of all of Scripture is the cross of Christ. The Old Testament in its entirety points to the cross. It expects the cross, anticipates the cross, and is incomplete without the cross. Likewise, the New Testament looks back to the cross, is established on the cross, and explains the cross.

How do we know that the atoning death of Jesus Christ is the primary theme of the Old Testament? Let me turn your attention to a story in Luke 24. There we find two men to whom Jesus appeared in His post-resurrected form. Having

no idea who they were talking to, they spoke with Him about the events of the last few days. They told Him that a man named Jesus of Nazareth had recently been crucified. They had hoped that He was Israel's Messiah, but now those dreams were dashed. An odd thing had taken place, though. Some women had gone to His tomb three days after His crucifixion and had found it empty. Now they didn't know what to believe. In response to all of this Jesus replies in verse 25, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to *suffer these things and to enter into His glory*? And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." Later in verse 44 Jesus goes on to say to the 11 disciples, "'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should *suffer and rise again from the dead the third day*; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'" Jesus is declaring here that all the Old Testament Scriptures had His death and resurrection as their primary theme!

That should not really be difficult to believe when you consider for a moment the types embedded in the Old Testament that looked forward to Christ's death upon the cross. For example, Abraham was called of God to offer his only son upon a mountain as a burnt offering, clearly pointing forward to the day when another Father would offer His only begotten Son upon another mountain to atone for our sins (Heb. 11:17-19). Likewise, when God determined to release His people from slavery in Egypt, He instructed them to kill a male lamb a year old, and apply its blood to the lintel and doorposts of the house so that when the angel of death went on his errand of vengeance he would pass over these homes and not destroy the firstborn within. However, the families where no blood was applied to the door would find that the destroyer had taken the life of their firstborn. All of this points to Christ as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of those who had applied His blood to their guilty souls through faith (1 Cor. 5:7). Another fascinating picture of the cross can be found in Leviticus 16. There we find a description of the Day of Atonement. On this special day the high priest would make atonement for the sins of the people. To do so he would lay his hand upon a live goat while confessing the sins of the people of Israel. This scapegoat would then be led away into the wilderness never to return. Additionally, the high priest would slay another goat and take its blood within the veil into the holy of holies where God's glorious presence was manifested in a brilliant, uncreated light. This was the one and only day of the year that any man was permitted in this holy place. There in the holy of holies, the high priest would sprinkle the shed blood of the innocent substitute on top of the mercy seat. (The mercy seat was a slab of pure gold lying on top of the ark of the covenant.) Inside this ark the tables of the ten commandments had been deposited. Because the people had broken the ten commandments, the blood must be shed and sprinkled on the mercy seat to cover their sins in the sight of God. By sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat, the high priest was beseeching God to have mercy on the people by accepting the death of the innocent goat instead of their death. Likewise, our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ has done marvelous things through His work on the cross. Not only has He borne our sin away, never to return, but He has also satisfied God's justice, bearing the wrath of His Father which we justly deserved. These are just a sampling of the various types to be found in our Old Testament in which the cross of Jesus Christ is foreshadowed hundreds of years in advance.

Furthermore, the atoning death of our adorable Savior is foreshadowed often in Old Testament prophecies. Consider these words from Psalm 22:7-8, 14-18, "All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 'Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.' I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and Thou dost lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." Notice also the language of Daniel 9:26, "Messiah will be cut off and have nothing." Furthermore, the whole of Isaiah 53, which we will examine in detail later, is a prophecy of the death, resurrection, and glory of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, the cross of Christ is obviously the central theme of the New Testament. Consider, for example the content of the four gospels. In the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John there are 89 chapters in all. Of those 89 chapters, 85 of them cover the last 3 years in the life of Christ. Of those 85 chapters, 27 of them cover the last 8 days in His life! This amazing fact leads us to believe that the overwhelming concern of the gospel writers was to declare the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In addition, consider for a moment the book of Acts. As you read the sermons of Peter and Paul you quickly find that in every message they made a beeline for the cross. In Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost he thunders, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know -- this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death (Acts 2:22-23). In Peter's next sermon we find him relating this, "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled (Acts 3:18). Again in Acts 4 Peter declares, "let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead -- by this name this man stands here before you in good health (Acts 4:10). In Acts 5:30 again we read, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross." When Peter preaches to Cornelius and his household his theme is the same, "And we are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross (Acts 10:39). The crucifixion of the Son of God was also a key theme in Paul's preaching. "And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed (Acts 13:28). All the way through the Book of Acts the scarlet thread of the atoning death of Jesus Christ is seen as a primary element in apostolic preaching.

Furthermore, a major portion of the New Testament epistles is taken up with explaining the cross and its implications for the believer. When Paul wants to teach Christians about their sanctification, he does so by telling them that they have died with Christ, and thus are dead to sin (Rom. 6:1-11). When Paul wants to teach husbands how they are to treat their wives he directs them to look at the example of Jesus who loved the church and gave Himself for her (Eph. 5:22-33). When Paul wants to teach the church about how they are to love one another he says that they must walk in love, just as Christ also loved them, and gave Himself up for them (Eph. 5:1-2). When Paul urges them to forgive one another he says "just as God in Christ has forgiven us" (Eph. 4:32). When Paul wants to teach the church about the importance of humility he again refers them to the cross and declares, "and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:3-8).

Besides all of this, Christ has left two ordinances to be observed by the church -- baptism and the Lord's Supper. In each one the cross is central. In baptism we express our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. In the Lord's Supper we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Additionally, when we come to the book of Revelation the title used most often of Jesus Christ is the Lamb. This title of Christ is found an astounding 28 times in a book of only 22 chapters! Its great theme is "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

Clearly, the preoccupation of the New Testament, just like that of the Old Testament, is the atoning work of Christ for sinners. It is like the hub of a wheel. All the other truths of Scripture, like spokes, are connected to it, but it remains central in all of Scripture.

However, of all that God has declared to us about the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the Mount Everest is found here in Isaiah 53. Seven hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah put down on paper a record of Christ's crucifixion so vivid and real, that we can hardly believe he wasn't an eyewitness.

Isaiah 53 actually begins in Isaiah 52:13. It would have made more sense for those who devised the chapter divisions of the Bible to have begun a new chapter division at 52:13 and concluded the chapter with 53:12, for the entire section details the person and work of God's Servant. From Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 there are five paragraphs of three verses each. Each paragraph builds towards the next in a logical progression. In 52:13-15 we see the overall Mission of God's Servant. In 53:1-3 we see the Rejection of God's Servant. In 53:4-6 we see the Sufferings of God's Servant. In 53:7-9 we see the Death of God's Servant. Finally, in 53:10-12 we see the Triumphs of God's Servant now that He is raised from the dead. Note the progression: mission, rejection, sufferings, death and triumphant resurrection. It's almost as if Isaiah were writing down a condensed version of Christ's earthly work.

It is my fervent prayer that as you read through these meditations on Isaiah 53, God will fill you with a great sense of the excellence and beauty of your glorious Redeemer! May the wonder of Christ's dying love flood your souls and produce a renewed love for Jesus in your heart! In heaven we will be singing a new song with these lyrics, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). Let's join the heavenly chorus in rapturous song now, as we anticipate singing it to Him one day face to face. May Christ Jesus be glorified in His church world without end!

Chapter 2

The Mission Of God's Servant

"Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle many nations, kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand." Isaiah 52:13-15

This precious passage of Scripture opens in Isaiah 52:13 with the words, **"Behold, My Servant will prosper."** The entire passage, from 52:13 - 53:12 is dealing with God's Servant. In case we might get the idea that the person being described has changed along the way, in 52:11 we read again, **"My Servant will justify the many."** From beginning to end the Servant of God is the subject of this peerless gospel portrait. In this first paragraph the Holy Spirit has recorded for us the mission of God's Servant.

The Success Of The Mission Of God's Servant

The initial paragraph opens up with **"Behold!"** Here God the Father is speaking of His beloved Son. He wants to arrest our attention. He's saying, "Behold! Look! Listen and tune in! I've got something very important to tell you about this Servant of mine." Well, what are to behold? Obviously we are to behold God's Servant -- **"Behold, My Servant will prosper."** I find it interesting that God describes the Lord Jesus Christ as His Servant. A servant is one who does the will of his master. By identifying Christ as His Servant, God is telling us that Jesus Christ came to earth to do His will. He came to keep His commandments. In John 10:17-18 Jesus declares, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This *commandment* I received from My Father." Here Jesus tells us that His laying down of His life and His rising again from the dead were done in obedience to God's commandment. In other words, what Jesus said and did on earth was not done in independence of His Father, but was done in obedience to His Father's will. He expressly states this in many places. Consider His words in the following passages:

John 5:19 "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

John 5:30 "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

John 8:28 "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."

John 12:49 "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak."

I think these statements of Christ make it abundantly clear that Christ was a Man on a mission. He came down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of His Father. What was that mission? Well, long before the world was made, God, knowing that Adam and Eve would sin against Him and plunge the whole world into death, depravity, and darkness, decided that He would not allow the whole human race to suffer the torments of hell, although He would have been entirely just in doing so. Instead, He determined that He would save a people out of this wicked world for His own praise and glory. These people were chosen by the Father, and then given to Christ. Jesus was charged with the mission of coming to the earth, becoming a man, living a perfect life, dying a substitutionary death, and then rising again from the dead to sit at the Father's right hand in heaven. He was to do all of this as the Representative Head of these people His Father had chosen. He would be born for them, live for them, die for them, rise for them, and rule the universe at the Father's right hand for them. Before the foundation of the world, the Father gave His Son the charge of securing the eternal salvation of every one of His sheep. Consider the words of our Lord and His apostles:

John 6:38-39 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

John 17:2,6,9 "Even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life... I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word... I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine."

1 Peter 1:20-21 "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God."

Revelation 13:8 "And all who dwell on the earth will worship him (the beast), everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain."

"Behold, My Servant *will prosper*." Over 750 years before Jesus was ever born, God the Father declared that Jesus would successfully complete the mission He had assigned Him. The Hebrew words for "will prosper" have the meaning of "to act wisely so as to experience success and prosperity." From the divine perspective, the successful accomplishment of Christ's mission was never in doubt. Though Herod tried to kill all male babies under two years of age, he could never succeed in killing Jesus, for the Father had declared that His Servant would prosper. Though the religious leaders tried to stone Him and cast Him off the side of a cliff before His hour had come, it was impossible for them to carry out their plans, for it was foretold that His Servant would prosper. As Jesus was just about to expire His last breath He cried, "It is finished!" Something was accomplished at the cross! Jesus wasn't "hoping" His death would accomplish something. No, He was absolutely certain that His death had accomplished the eternal purpose of

His Heavenly Father. Even before He came to the earth, Christ had the promise of His Father that He would be successful in making atonement for the sins of His people. Nothing under heaven could stop Him from prospering in His Father's mission. Never was atonement for our sin in any way in jeopardy. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

The Exaltation After The Mission Of God's Servant

"He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted." The three phrases, "high", "lifted up", and "greatly exalted" are used in the book of Isaiah to speak of the highest rank and position in the universe. They are used as adjectives to describe Jehovah Himself. I find it interesting that Isaiah is not content to use just one of the terms, but must pile one superlative upon another to ensure to us that Jesus Christ would be exalted to the supreme place. It appears that the Holy Spirit is emphasizing the fact that God would reward His Son for His obedience and sufferings. Some passages in the New Testament give clarity to Isaiah's words:

Ephesians 1:20-23 "which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

Philippians 2:8-11 "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Hebrews 1:3 "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Today Christ reigns from heaven as the supreme Lord over the entire universe. He is administering God's kingdom for the glory of His Father and the good of His church. Oh, what an exalted position our Lord has assumed! Is this the Jesus you know? Is He high, lifted up, and greatly exalted in your mind, heart and life? Too often we reduce Jesus to our pal or buddy, when we ought to be filled with reverence and awe at His supreme majesty! See the Lord Jesus Christ today for who He is -- the risen and exalted Son of the living God! Bow down before Him in reverent worship. Determine that you will no longer be flippant or irreverent towards Him, but instead serve Him as the King of kings, and Lord of Lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see!

The Humiliation In The Mission Of God's Servant

"Just as many were *astonished* at you, My people." The word "astonished" here means to be appalled or horrified. At whom were many appalled? The New American Standard Bible supplies the words "My people" which leaves us with the impression that many were astonished when they saw the Jewish people. I believe this is incorrect. These words are not in the original, but were added by the translators. In this passage the Father is speaking directly to His Son. The Jewish people are not even in view in this entire chapter. After consulting ten other translations, I didn't find these words supplied in any of them. There is little doubt that the One that many were astonished at is not the Jewish people, but the same One being spoken of in the entire section -- the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Just as *many* were astonished." Who were these "many" who were astonished? Evidently, the prophet is speaking of those who saw Christ in His awful sufferings. The next two lines are sort of a parenthesis, explaining what is meant by the statement, "Just as many were astonished at you, My people." Note how the New International Version has translated verse 14, "Just as there were many who were appalled at Him - His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness - so will He sprinkle many nations." Notice how part of that verse is set off by dashes. It's the New International Version translators' way of pointing out that these words really form a parenthesis which explains the first line of verse 14.

"So His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." By this expression the Holy Spirit is indicating that as Christ hung from that Roman cross, He ceased to even resemble a man. He no longer possessed the semblance of humanity. I think a few moments of reflection on His sufferings will show how this was so. By the time Jesus was finally nailed to the cross He had gone at least 24 hours without sleep, and at least 12 hours without food or water. He had been beaten, spat upon, and subjected to having portions of His beard plucked out. He had been interrogated relentlessly throughout the night. He had been scourged by a Roman soldier with a cat-of-nine tails. Add to all of this the crown of thorns driven into His skull, with the blood trickling down His face, the sweat mingling with the blood as He is forced to carry the heavy cross-piece to the execution site, and the fact that all of His bones were out of joint, and I think you can readily understand why Jesus would no longer resemble a man. I don't think the movies depicting the life of Christ do justice to the horror of His sufferings.

As Christ's exaltation and glorification were of the highest nature, so His degradation was of the lowest nature. Our Blessed Lord stooped from the highest place in the universe, to assume the lowest position under heaven. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Oh, I wonder if we really appreciate the depths of suffering to which Christ willingly went to save us. Not only did He condescend to take upon Himself human nature eternally, live and die as a poor man, but He was also willing to be beaten and bloodied so badly that the people of His day did not even recognize Him as a man any longer! Oh, how this ought to break our hearts for our own sins which caused Him to be nailed to that tree!

The Fruit Of The Mission Of God's Servant

"Thus He will sprinkle" The word "sprinkle" is a technical word found in the Mosaic law for ritual purification. According to the Law of Moses, either blood or water was sprinkled by the priests to bring cleansing to others. Christ in His obedience unto death was acting as a priest of God in order to cleanse us from our sin. This is the work He will prosper in and on account of which He will be so greatly exalted. The work of an Old Testament high priest was two-fold: to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people, and then to intercede for them within the veil. Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest, has offered Himself as the substitutionary Lamb of God upon Calvary's cross, and then has entered within the veil into heaven itself to intercede that the virtue of His shed blood would be applied to all His people. During those three hours of darkness on Calvary, the cross became an altar, and the Son of Man became the Lamb of God to atone for our sins. Now that He has been exalted to the Father's right hand, He sends His Spirit into the hearts of His people to apply the virtue of that cleansing blood to their souls.

"Many nations" Here we have a glimpse into that wonderful truth that Christ would not just die for the sins of the people of Israel, but as a Savior of the world. He will die for many nations, not just the one nation of Israel. That's why we read in Revelation 5:9 "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from *every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*'" That's why the unbelieving high priest Caiaphas prophesied and said that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are

scattered abroad (Jn. 11:51-52). God has an elect people out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation, and Jesus has atoned for all of their sins.

"Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand." What a picture! The highest, proudest, most noble of men will be so awed by the majesty of His presence as they recognize Him for who He is that they will humbly submit their lives to Him in silence. There are two different ways in which this statement will be fulfilled.

First, it will be fulfilled in the preaching of the gospel. As Christ's servants preach the everlasting gospel the world over, some kings will hear, be convicted of sin, and be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. They will hear and see things they had never heard and seen before. As the Holy Spirit reveals to them their own guilt and wretchedness, they will see and understand the wonderful truths of the gospel.

Secondly, this statement will also be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ. At that time, every person who has ever lived, including kings, will recognize Christ for who He is. At that time their mouths will be shut on account of Him. They will not be able to justify themselves. All men will be raised from the dead and gathered before Him. The books will be opened, and all the world will see them for who they are. No excuses will be accepted in that day. No man will be permitted to open his mouth in his defense. On that day all the world will see and hear things they never understood before. They will realize that Jesus is not just a good man, a teacher, a prophet, a miracle worker, a fiction of someone's overworked imagination, or someone to consider only at Christmas. They will see and perceive that the One that they scorned, rejected, and ignored is the God of the universe who reigns and judges all men with perfect justice!

What does our text reveal about the mission of God's Servant? Well, it reveals that it will be successful, that it will be followed by great exaltation, that it would involve deep humiliation, and that it would wash away the sins of people from many different nations including even kings. What a grand sweeping look at Christ's mission we find in these three short verses!

Now that you have seen something of the glory of Christ in this passage, I think a few heart-searching questions are in order: Are you worshipping the Jesus of the Bible? There are many different Christs that people vainly worship. There is the Baby Jesus that multitudes of unsaved people worship at Christmas, but live indifferently to the rest of the year. There is the Doctor Jesus that many pray to when they are sick and in need of healing, but once healed go on their way in neglect of Him. There is the Genie Jesus who is commanded by the positive confessions of many to give them wealth and riches. There is also the Psychiatrist Jesus who is appealed to in order to gain a better self-esteem or emotional wholeness. I'm not talking about those Christs. I'm talking about Jesus the Savior! The Scripture declares, "you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." Jesus didn't come to fix our temporary problems. He came to save us from sin and hell and make us holy! If you aren't interested in that Jesus, you don't have the right one! Today this same Jesus is exalted as the supreme person in all of the universe and one day will return to judge all men. Oh, worship Him! Fear Him! Reverence Him!

Another question which must be faced is this -- "Does Christ's work of atonement occupy the primary place of importance in your mind and heart?" So often once a Christian has been saved a few years, he decides that he wants to get beyond the elemental things of Christianity like the cross, and go on to bigger and better things. My friends, there is nothing bigger and better than the cross of Jesus Christ. No matter how long you spend meditating on and studying Christ's work on Calvary, you will never plumb the depths of the riches of God's Word on this matter. Christian, don't let anything besides the cross of Christ steal away your heart! It's amazing how easily we can be excited about the San Francisco 49'ers or the Oakland Athletics, or fighting abortion or pornography, and yet have a cold heart to the glory of Christ and His saving work. May that declaration of the apostle Paul be ours, "But may it

never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal.6:14).

Chapter 3

The Rejection Of God's Servant

"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." Isaiah 53:1-3

Christ's overall mission was described in Isaiah 52:13-15. Isaiah now describes the first aspect of that mission -- His rejection. In this section there is a question posed in two similar ways in verse one, followed by the answer to the question in verses two and three.

The Question

The thrust of the question is, "Why aren't all men believing?" In order to understand why this question would even be asked, we need to see the great contrast between 52:13-15 and 53:13. In the previous chapter we saw that many nations would be sprinkled, and even kings would shut their mouths on account of Him. This points to the worldwide spread of the gospel in the New Testament church. The gospel was not just for the Jews, but for every nation under heaven. There would be some from every nation who would come to believe on Christ and receive the riches of salvation. But in spite of this glowing optimism in 52:13-15, chapter 53 opens up with **"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"** This was the question the gospel preachers in the first century asked when they witnessed so few of their fellow Jews believing on Christ. The question would quite naturally have surfaced, "If Christ is really Israel's long-awaited Messiah, why aren't the Jews receiving Him now that He has come? Isn't He the One they have been awaiting for centuries? What's gone wrong?" Here we have a hint that though the gospel would triumph in the hearts of the Gentiles around the world, comparatively few of the Jews would turn in faith to Christ and be saved. We see this same truth in Romans 10:1 where the apostle Paul laments, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them (the Jews) is for their salvation."

Who Is Asking The Question? The first thing to ask ourselves as we approach this passage is, "Who are the persons asking the question?" It can't be a single individual like God or Isaiah because the question is "Who has believed OUR message?" There were a number of persons asking this question. The key to determining the answer to who was asking the question is found in the immediate context of chapter 52. Isaiah has been prophesying that Israel would be carried into captivity by the Babylonians because of their idolatry. Later God would free them to return home to Palestine. In 52:7 we find the mention of messengers who would come to these captives bearing the good news that they are free to return to their homeland. "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" Their triumphant message is, "Your God reigns!" No doubt, many Jews had come to the conclusion that Jehovah was no greater than the tribal deities of the Philistines or the Babylonians. In their minds He was no more able to deliver than any other god of the heathen. But suddenly someone comes running over the mountains with the message of glad tidings that God reigns. He has proven it by setting the people of Israel free! He has broken the chains of the Babylonians that bound them and has released them to go home. That is the message of 52:9-11 "Break forth, shout joyfully together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted His people, He has

redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the LORD." These messengers were bearers of a gospel. They told of the good news that God had released His captive people. Isaiah 52:7 tells us that these messengers announce peace, bring good news of happiness and announce salvation. The deliverance from Babylonian captivity was only a faint picture of the far greater deliverance from sin that Christ has accomplished for us. These messengers of good news in Isaiah 52:7 are the Old Testament counterparts to the New Testament gospel preachers who proclaim peace, good news and salvation to lost sinners. These New Testament gospel preachers are the ones asking the question "Lord, who has believed our report?" I have come to this conclusion because Paul applies Isaiah 52:7 to first century gospel preachers in Romans 10:15-17. Note his words: "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!' However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." In this passage the apostle Paul is declaring that the gospel preachers of the first century who brought the Word of Christ are fulfilling this passage from Isaiah 52:7. In Isaiah's day the Israelites experienced a physical release from Babylonian captivity. But this physical release was only a picture of the spiritual release from sin, Satan, death and hell that gospel preachers announce under the New Covenant. Paul is declaring to us in Romans 10:16 that as his Jewish contemporaries rejected Jesus Christ, Isaiah 53:1 was being fulfilled.

What Is the Message They Didn't Believe? Now that we have discovered who is asking the question, we must determine what it was that these first century Jews did not believe. Romans 10:15-16 will supply the answer. "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring *glad tidings* of good things!' However, they did not all heed the *glad tidings*; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed *our report*?' " It's clear that the message that the Jews did not embrace was the glad tidings, which is just another way of talking about the gospel. The gospel is the glad tidings of what God has done in Christ to save sinners. It declares that any sinner who comes to God repenting of his sin and trusting in Christ will be rescued from the wrath to come and live eternally with God in heaven. It is the joyous proclamation of what God has done to save men enslaved to sin. However, although this message was wonderful, thrilling, and joyous, few of the Jewish people believed it.

Why Didn't The Jews Believe The Gospel? This is the next logical question. If the message of the gospel is such wonderful news, why didn't the Jews eagerly embrace it? Well to answer this question we must first understand that in 53:1 we have an instance of Hebrew parallelism. This particular literary device shows up often in the Old Testament. Hebrew parallelism is the setting forth of the same truth in a single verse in slightly different ways. In 53:1 the first line is saying substantially the same thing as the second, only using different words. "Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" In other words, to believe the message of the gospel is to have the arm of the Lord revealed to you. What is the arm of the Lord? It is the **message** of 53:1, or in other words, the gospel of Christ. The arm of the Lord conveys the idea of the power of God. Isaiah 52:10 declares, "The Lord has bared *His holy arm* in the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God." You see, to all the other nations, Jehovah was a joke. He hadn't kept His people from captivity. Babylon had conquered Israel just as they had conquered all the other nations. But now, God has rolled up His sleeves to bare His holy arm in order to display His strength and power in the eyes of all the nations. No wonder Paul says in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the *gospel*, for it is the *power of God* to salvation," In 1 Corinthians 1:18 he says again, "For the *word of the cross* is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the *power of God*." Thus, when Isaiah says "And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" he's asking, "to whom was the gospel of Jesus Christ revealed in power so as to save men from sin and bring them to eternal glory?" The gospel of Jesus Christ is God's arm. It is His power when accompanied by the regenerating ministry of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 "knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also *in power and in the Holy Spirit* and with full conviction."

God is declaring to us that the reason the Jews didn't believe in Jesus Christ is because the gospel was not revealed to them in power. Again the parallelism of Isaiah 53:1 reveals that to believe the gospel is the same thing as to have the arm of the Lord revealed. Therefore, those who do not believe the gospel do so because the gospel has not been revealed to them. In other words, God has not opened their blinded eyes to the wonderful truths of His good news. This truth should not stumble us. It is clearly taught in other places of Scripture. For example, consider Matthew 11:25-27, "At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that *Thou didst hide these things* from the wise and intelligent and *didst reveal them* to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and *anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*.'" Here we are taught that no one can come to know God unless Jesus Christ chooses to reveal God to them. Apart from His shining in their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor.4:6) we will never savingly believe in Jesus Christ. Furthermore we have the inspired words of the Holy Spirit in John 12:37-39, "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet *they were not believing in Him*; that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' For this cause *they could not believe*, for Isaiah said again, 'He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them.'" Except God grant a man special regenerating grace, he cannot believe on Christ to the saving of his soul.

You see, something must happen inside a man before he can believe in Christ. God must perform a supernatural operation in a man's heart to enable him to come to Christ in saving faith. According to the Word of God, faith and repentance are not abilities we possess in ourselves, but are gifts of grace bestowed by our Sovereign God on those He intends to save (Eph.2:8, 2 Tim.2:25, Acts 5:31, Jn. 6:65).

Perhaps the reason entertainment is so pervasive in the Christianity of our own day is because we have ceased to believe this important truth, that our salvation is not of ourselves, but from a sovereign God. We see scores of churches adopting the seeker sensitive model of church growth and evangelism. Because seeker sensitive churches believe that men have the ability in themselves to make a decision for Christ and secure their own salvation, they try to make church as comfortable and attractive to lost sinners as possible. Professional music and drama grace the stage of the church each Sunday morning along with a short and positive, but often watered down message that is sure not to offend the seeker. The goal of these methods is to induce the unsuspecting sinner to make his decision for Christ, while he is being entertained and made to feel comfortable in church. The subjects of sin, repentance, judgment, and the wrath of God are avoided as they may scare away the seeker before he has made his decision. This must also be why the altar call is so prevalent in our own day. We have ceased to believe the Bible when it comes to the way God saves sinners. We think that if we can just persuade a man to walk down an aisle, he has secured his salvation. We forget all too readily that even if we could get a man to walk an aisle 1,000 times and attend 1,000 seeker sensitive services, if God does not give a man a revelation of the glory of the gospel, he will remain dead in his sins. Our temptation today is to adopt one of these modern unbiblical practices if the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His apostles doesn't produce results. But we must remain true to God's Word. He has called us to proclaim the pure, unadulterated gospel of Christ. This is the message that God has always honored by accompanying it with His power to save. If this message doesn't result in the salvation of men, then we'll just have to let the chips fall where they will, because it is the only message God has given us to preach!

The Answer

We've seen the question that these first century preachers of the gospel were posing. They wanted to know why so few of their countrymen were believing in Jesus Christ. Now let's take a look at the human answer as to why all men

did not believe in Jesus Christ. Basically, the answer can be summed up in one sentence -- He was not the Messiah they wanted!

His Origin Was All Wrong. Isaiah 53:2 tells us, "**For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground.**" The word **tender shoot** means "a suckling." It can refer to a human suckling or a sucker plant. The context demands that a sucker plant is in view. This is a plant that grows out of the roots of another plant. In Isaiah 11:1 this is how the Lord Jesus Christ is described, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit." Jesus Christ was a branch that sprung from the roots of Jesse (David's father). Try to envision an old stump from what was once a great and magnificent tree out in a dry, barren land. This stump is dormant and dead. However, suddenly a sucker plant begins to grow out from the side of this stump. The old, dead stump represents the house of David, which had once been a giant tree. Often in the Scriptures, a tree represents a kingdom. But David's kingdom had long since fallen into ruin. It had decayed and been chopped down. At the time of the birth of Christ, no one was sitting on the throne of David. Israel was just a vassal state of Rome, existing at its pleasure. The royal line had fallen into a lowly condition. It was like an old, dead, dried up stump. And it was out of this lowly, humble condition, that Jesus Christ came forth.

The Jews were looking for a Messiah who would be a great and mighty king; one who would come from David's royal line and sit upon His throne, and destroy all their enemies. However, when Christ came, He lacked these majestic origins, being born in a stable and cradled in a manger. He was born to poor parents who had to offer the poor man's sacrifice of turtledoves when they presented Him to the Lord. He was the obscure son of a carpenter who lived as a poor man all His life. When He arrived on the scene, what was the response of the people? "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things? And they took offense at Him" (Mt. 13:55-57). Because His origin was all wrong, the religious leaders of His day despised and rejected Him, even to the point of trying to stone Him and throw Him off the side of a cliff.

His Appearance Was All Wrong. Not only were Christ's origins all wrong to be the Messiah the people wanted, but His appearance was wrong as well. Isaiah 53:2 goes on to say, "**He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.**" Christ didn't appear in regal attire. The Jews were looking for the Messiah to be decked out in gorgeous robes, with a crown on his head, accompanied by the noble and dignified people of His day, riding into Jerusalem on a great white steed. Instead, He was very ordinary in His appearance. In all likelihood, He looked very much like any other normal Jewish man of His day. When He did ride into Jerusalem, He did so on a borrowed donkey, not a great white stallion. He lived a simple life with followers who were the rabble and outcasts of His day -- tax collectors, prostitutes and fishermen. His image was completely wrong for the Jewish nation's idea of the Messiah.

It is interesting that today the so-called "experts" say that the church must project the right image if they are to be successful in God's work. They must give the impression that they are on the move and that things are happening. They must have a beautiful building, flashy bulletins, top-notch music, and a witty, humorous pastor. They must communicate the message, "We've got it together!" However, Jesus projected the image of a humble, meek, servant of God. He was not attractive to sinners. In fact He's still not! To believers, Christ is altogether lovely, the fairest of ten thousand, the bright and morning star. He is beautiful beyond description to the eye of faith. But to the natural eye He is despised and rejected, and always will be unless God reveals the power of the gospel to him. Today when we want our kids to be impressed with Jesus, we may invite a famous football player to their high school campus to speak to them about Christ. We think that if we can get someone who is successful in the world to put in a good word for Jesus, then we can sell Christ to the masses. Instead, we ought to be on our knees in prayer that the Spirit of God would make this crucified Jew an object of glory and beauty to sinners! Do you see His beauty? Is He all together lovely to you? Is He the treasure that for joy over it you are willing to sell all that you have to buy the field in which it is hid? Oh, may the Spirit of God open our eyes to His glory!

His Lifestyle Was All Wrong. Not only was Christ's origin and appearance all wrong, but His lifestyle was all wrong to be Messiah as well. Isaiah 53:3 tells us He was "**a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.**" This sorrow and grief spoken of were His own. It was the sorrow and grief He endured while living on this sin-cursed earth. It was the result of the persecution, scoffing, and contempt leveled against Him. It was the result of being accused of being demon-possessed, a drunkard, a man born of fornication, a blasphemer, and a Samaritan. It's interesting that though the Bible tells us three times that Jesus wept, it nowhere tells us that He laughed. Not only did He personally experience this sorrow and grief because of the way He was treated, but it was also the result of His entering into the sorrow and grief of others. The phrase "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" can also be translated "a man of pains and acquainted with sicknesses." It appears that during His earthly ministry Jesus sought out human misery. Those that came to Him were the lepers, the vile, the lowly, the unclean, the prostitutes, and the despised. Jesus knew firsthand the shattering effects of sin and this made Him a sober man. He wasn't a clown, or a joke-teller. There was a solemnity that emerged from His sensitivity to the devastating effects of sin. If all you wanted was mindless chit chat or a few jokes, Jesus was not a comfortable person to be around.

How much does the church today partake of the Spirit of Christ? Is the purpose of going to church to laugh uncontrollably "in the Spirit"? Should we be trying to put on a comedy act, so that people leave giggling and laughing, sure to come back? I don't think so. The purpose of meeting together is to worship the living God and hear His Word that we might obey His voice! Though we ought to experience the joy of the Holy Spirit as we meet together, there are times when we ought to leave church weeping! There are times when we should leave a worship service feeling bad, troubled, and convicted of our sins. I'm concerned that there is something terribly wrong when we attend church in order to get our laughs for the week.

As a result of the fact that Jesus' origins, appearance, and lifestyle were all wrong, the Jews rejected Him. Isaiah 53:3 tells us that "**He was despised and forsaken of men.**" Not only was He not an object of admiration, He was an object of derision. Men were repulsed by Him. In the words of our text, "**He was like one from whom men hide their face.**" They hid their faces from Him. To them, He was a nobody. He was not the Messiah they wanted! He was all wrong for the job!

But what was the real reason the Jews rejected Jesus Christ? What is the real reason men and women reject Him today? The answer lies in the Biblical doctrine of human depravity. Today, Jesus Christ is still despised and rejected. He's still not the kind of Savior that men want. Men want a freedom to sin, not a freedom from sin. They have no use for a kingdom in which truth and holiness reign. The blessedness He came to give is not what men want. Why is this so? The stream can be traced all the way back to the fountainhead of human depravity. It's our wicked heart that makes us spurn His holy love. When God came walking into town, how did men treat Him? They took the hands that cured leprosy, healed withered limbs, and gave sight to the blind, and drove nails through them. They took the feet that had carried Him about doing good and healing all oppressed of the devil, and drove spikes through them. They took the noblest brow that ever graced this world and pressed a crown of thorns into it. When the holy, spotless Son of God came to earth, what did we do? We murdered Him! We flatter ourselves by saying, "We would have treated Him differently if He appeared today." My friend, you and I are made of the very same stuff as they were! Do you see the roots of what we are? The core of our being is just as rotten as theirs. We all are born with a wicked heart. Our depravity would take God and murder Him if it had a chance! Oh, let this thought humble you! If it were not for the grace of God, we would still be despising and forsaking Him today.

But do you now think this way concerning Jesus? Before it was true that we despised and forsook Him. We did not esteem Him. He held no value in our eyes. God came and we looked in His eyes and were disgusted. We turned away and didn't want to have anything to do with Him. We rejected, ignored, and neglected the One who came to save us! But now everything has changed. God has enabled us to see a beauty and loveliness in Christ that thrills our souls! Being a Christian is not just that now we like to go to church instead of going to bars. It is not just that we like to do religious things instead of sinful things. It's not just being enraptured with a system of doctrine. No, being a

Christian means that we love Christ with all our hearts! The person of Jesus captivates us. Is that true of you? If you see more glory in a one dollar bill than in the face of Jesus Christ, chances are that you are still lost. But to those who believe, He is precious! Oh saints, go on to give Him the glory and honor He is so worthy of!

Chapter 4

The Sufferings Of God's Servant

"Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." Isaiah 53:4-6

If Isaiah 53 is the Mount Everest of all that God has to say on the subject of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, then Isaiah 53:4-6 is the topmost tip of that mountain. This paragraph gets at the heart of what substitutionary atonement is all about. Oh, may the omnipotent Spirit of God give us grace to see the unsearchable riches found here!

To begin with it would be helpful for us to determine who is the one doing the speaking when we arrive at Isaiah 53:4. To be sure, Isaiah is the one writing this prophecy, but whose perspective is He writing from? Isaiah 53:1 asks the question, **"Who has believed our message?"** In Romans 10:16 we find that Paul says this passage was fulfilled in the first century when the Jews rejected Jesus Christ and the gospel that the early preachers proclaimed. These primitive gospel preachers are lamenting the fact that their countrymen, the Jews, have rejected their Messiah when He came. They go on from there, giving us the answer to their question. The reason why the Jews rejected Jesus Christ was that He didn't have the right origin, appearance or lifestyle. But as we come to verse 4, these same early preachers say **"Surely our griefs He Himself bore."** The early gospel preachers are giving their testimony. Before, they too had despised and rejected Him. There was nothing in Him to attract them, but rather everything to repulse them. However, now they have had a change of mind regarding Him. Now they see everything so differently! They understand now who He was and what He was doing. Here Isaiah speaks of Christ bearing our griefs and sorrows. The Hebrew word translated "griefs" here normally means sickness. In fact, it is translated that way 20 out of 24 times in the King James version. Likewise the word translated "sorrows" often has the meaning of pains. Some expositors, noting this, say that Isaiah was simply using figurative language to describe sin. They believe he is referring to sin under the figure of sickness. In other words, they believe Isaiah was simply saying that Christ bore our sins. Though that is true, I don't think it is the correct interpretation here. My reasoning is quite simple. Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us what it means in Matthew 8:16-17 where we read, "And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill *in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled*, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our disease." According to Matthew, Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled in the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. Some Bible teachers claim that healing is in the atonement. What they mean by that is that Christ bore our sicknesses in the same way that He bore our sins. Therefore, just as an individual receives the forgiveness of his sins by faith, he also can receive the healing of his illnesses by faith. They believe that both are gifts guaranteed by the atoning work of Christ, and can be claimed by faith. They believe that if an individual is not forgiven, it is because he does not possess faith. Likewise, if a man is not healed, it must be because he does not possess enough faith. But this is just not true. Matthew clearly teaches us that Isaiah was speaking of Christ's healing ministry, not His atoning work on the cross when he said that Christ bore our sicknesses and carried away our pains. The passage is speaking of Christ, lifting up and carrying away the pains and sicknesses of people in His earthly healing ministry.

Isaiah goes on to say, "**Yet, we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.**" Isaiah begins with "yet." He's representing these early gospel preachers as saying, "In spite of all that, we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. We figured that He must have been a great sinner to suffer so much. When we saw Him whipped, beaten, scourged, and crucified, we figured He must have been a great blasphemer. As we saw Him flanked with a thief on each side, we said He must be a marked man." What these gospel preachers are really saying is, "We should have known better! When we saw Him suffer and die, we should have known that it was not for His own sins that God was punishing Him. If we had only looked at His gracious, compassionate ministry of healing, we would have put two and two together and known that He was not suffering for His own sins. It's interesting that this is exactly the conclusion that John comes to in John 12:37-38, "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him; that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, 'Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'" John is saying that the people of Christ's day ought to have believed. They saw the signs, miracles, and the healings of Christ, but they didn't believe in Him. In spite of all the evidence, they thought God was getting Him back for some great sin He had committed! But they were wrong! They ought to have known that someone so good, kind, compassionate and loving as to spend untold hours healing the sick and delivering the demon-possessed could not be suffering these agonies on the cross for His own sins. But now they have experienced a change of mind. The arm of the Lord has been revealed to them! They understand what was happening as Jesus Christ hung from that Roman cross from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and they are anxious to proclaim the atoning work of Christ to us. It is at this point that we have, in my opinion, the clearest teaching on the doctrine of substitutionary sufferings in all of the Bible. In Isaiah 53:5-6 we are told that Messiah's sufferings were violent, penal, substitutionary, appointed, and effectual.

Christ's Sufferings Were Severe

Notice the words Isaiah uses to describe Christ's sufferings. **But He was pierced through for our transgressions.** The words "pierced through" refer to being perforated or to being run through on a battlefield. **He was crushed for our iniquities.** Christ was broken into pieces. Of course here Isaiah is using figurative language. Jesus wasn't literally crushed into little pieces, but the sufferings He endured were similar to a man being crushed under a great weight. This speaks of His agonies as the crushing weight of the sin of His people was laid on His back. **The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him.** This chastening describes a severe punishment. **And by His scourging we are healed.** A Roman scourging was an excruciating ordeal. It was performed with a cat-of-nine tails. This instrument had a wooden handle to which leather strips were attached with pieces of bone, metal or glass sewn into the tips. When the slash came across a man's back it would literally strip the skin right off. That's why the soldiers counted their whippings in stripes. As the lash came across the back and then was jerked back it would leave a red stripe. Sometimes a man was so torn by the scourges that his muscles and bowels were exposed. Many men went stark, raving mad under the scourging. Others went blind and some died. Jesus Christ, under this horrendous ordeal became one mass of open, raw, quivering flesh trickling with blood. **But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.** The word "fall" is used in the Old Testament to refer to someone falling on another person in order to attack and kill them. Our sins were like a great and mighty army which encircled and then fell upon Christ until He died under their savagery.

I'm convinced we can never completely understand the severity of Christ's sufferings. He was pierced, crushed, chastened, and scourged, and then the blazing fury of divine wrath fell on Him! Christ suffered in every dimension. His physical sufferings included sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, physical beating, scourging, exhaustion, and then six hours of torture wherein he suffered asphyxiation. His emotional sufferings included the fact that He was betrayed by one of his closest associates, and then deserted by almost all of His closest friends. Yet, however severe the physical and emotional tortures of Christ were, His spiritual sufferings were by far the most intense. Herein Christ suffered the inner anguish of soul when He was abandoned by His Father. There on the cross when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?", Jesus was experiencing the withdrawal of every expression of the grace of God. For a

sinner to experience the abandonment of God is a horrible thought, but for the holy, spotless Son of God it meant infinite suffering. From all eternity Christ had been the continual object of His Father's delight, but on the cross He experienced the separation of His Father's loving embrace as He suffered the fullness of His Father's wrath against sin! In a very real sense, on the cross Christ experienced hell, and all of this was for our sake!

Christ's Sufferings Were Penal

When I describe Christ's sufferings as penal, I am referring to the fact that He was enduring the penalty for the transgressions of others. Penal sufferings are the endurance of punishment for the violation of a law. Our penal codes are a body of laws which indicate the kinds of punishments that correspond to particular crimes. There on the cross, Jesus Christ was being treated as a common criminal. How fitting it was that He was crucified between two thieves. Jesus was not suffering discipline like believers do when God needs to correct them to perfect their character. Neither was Christ suffering as a martyr to give us an example of non-retaliation. Instead, He was suffering as a criminal by enduring the penalty of the crimes we had committed against divine justice.

Which crimes was He punished for? Well, our text speaks of **transgressions** and **iniquities**. A "transgression" is an act of rebellion against the authority of God. God draws a line in the sand and commands us to stay on the other side, but we in defiance step over the boundary line. An "iniquity" is an act of perversion. For example, God tells us what is the right use of our physical bodies, but in defiance we defy His commands and use them in an immoral way. Both transgressions and iniquities are violations of God's law. **All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.** Often a sheep will get loose from the fold and break through a fence. We were like sheep. We broke through the boundary of God's law which He, in love, had established for us. Furthermore, we turned to our own way. This is the essence of sin -- living independently from God. The world applauds this independent spirit, but God is grieved by it.

Christ's Sufferings Were Substitutionary

Notice, that "He was pierced through for OUR transgressions. He was crushed for OUR iniquities. The chastening for OUR well-being fell upon Him, and by HIS scourging WE are healed. Jesus Christ died on our behalf, in our stead. If these words from Isaiah 53 don't teach the doctrine of substitutionary sin-bearing, then no words in the English language can teach it. We all know the meaning of substitution. If a football player breaks his leg, the coach sends in a substitute. The job of the substitute is to do what the regular player would have done in his place. That is exactly what Jesus Christ did on the cross. He did what we ought to have done. We ought to have faced the fullness of God's fury against our sin, but Christ bore those sufferings in our place. Consider these texts from the New Testament:

Matthew 20:28 "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life *a ransom for many*." Here the preposition "for" means "in behalf of."

Matthew 26:27-28 "And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out *for many* for forgiveness of sins."

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life *for the sheep*."

Ephesians 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up *for her*."

Titus 2:13-14 "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself *for us*, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

The wonderful truth of the Bible is that our salvation was obtained by the substitutionary sin-bearing of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross! He did for us what we never could have done for ourselves. He stepped in and actually bore the full penalty of the wrath of God against our sins, that we might not ever have to suffer it! All praise, glory and honor to the Lamb who has redeemed men out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation!

Christ's Sufferings Were Appointed

Our text declares in Isaiah 53:6 "**But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.**" Have you ever stopped to ponder the source of Christ's sufferings? It would be easy for someone to conclude that Pontius Pilate was the source of Christ's sufferings, for after all, it was Pilate who gave the official order to deliver Jesus up to be crucified (Mt. 27:26). Someone else might conclude that Christ's sufferings ultimately stem from Judas Iscariot, for he was the one who betrayed Christ into the hands of the Jewish leaders for thirty pieces of silver. Another might reasonably conclude that the ones ultimately responsible for Christ's sufferings were the Jewish leaders, for they were the ones who came up with the trumped up charges that ultimately led to His execution (Lk. 23:2). Someone else might conclude that the source of Christ's sufferings was the Roman soldiers, for they were the ones who actually drove the spikes into His hands and feet, and thrust the spear through His side. Or perhaps Satan was the one ultimately responsible, for after all, that wicked one put the idea of betraying Jesus into the heart of Judas (Jn. 13:2). Others conclude that it was actually all of us who are ultimately responsible for the death of Christ, for He was pierced through for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Is. 53:5). Although all of these statements are true in part, I submit to you that ultimately the source of Christ's sufferings was none of these persons. Ultimately *God Himself* was responsible for Christ's death! Does not our text tell us that *the Lord* has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him?! This truth is not taught only in this one isolated text. Consider the following:

Acts 2:23 "this Man, delivered up *by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God*, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."

Acts 4:27-28 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do *whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.*"

These texts declare to us in no uncertain terms that the cross of Jesus Christ was part of a predetermined plan. The cross was included in God's predestined purposes. Therefore, God Himself was the One ultimately responsible for Christ's sufferings. Jesus Himself states as much in Matthew 26:31 where He quotes Zechariah 13:7 and states, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.'" The incredible truth is that "the Lord was pleased to crush Him" (Is. 53:10). Just as Abraham was commanded to kill and sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, so too, God the Father did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all! So often we think of the sufferings of the cross only in terms of what Jesus endured, but it is equally true that God the Father must have endured untold agonies in giving up His Son to a tortuous death!

All of this should teach us a very important lesson. Jesus didn't cause God to love us by dying for us. It is sometimes imagined that Jesus changed God's disposition towards us from hate to love. It is fancied that God's holy hatred burned against us, but because Christ loved us, He has turned away God's hatred and caused Him to love us. In this scenario, God the Father and Jesus Christ would be at odds with one another. It is true that Christ bore the full brunt of God's blazing wrath against our sins on the cross, but that does not mean that God hated us previously. No, from

eternity we were chosen to be united to Christ, and thus loved in Christ. Christ's death does not secure God's love; rather, God's love secured Christ's death! "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). These passages teach us that God sent Jesus because He loved us. God's love for His people was no afterthought, but has existed from all eternity. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness (Jer. 31:3). Why not stop for a moment right where you are to praise and thank God for setting His great heart of love upon you from all eternity and sending His Son to die for you!

Christ's Sufferings Were Effectual

Our text tells us, "**by His scourging we are healed.**" Here we have another example of Hebrew parallelism. The line directly before this one states, "**The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him.**" The words *scourging* and *chastening* are parallel, and the words *healed* and *well-being* are parallel. The Hebrew word behind "well-being" is "shalom." It means peace, wholeness, or prosperity in every area of life. It speaks of an individual who is brought into an intimate relationship with God. The individual who has received God's "shalom" has gone from hostility with God to intimacy with God because of Christ's chastening. No longer are his sins liable to God's wrath, but instead he is the recipient of His special love. Therefore, when our text tells us that we are healed, it does not refer to physical healing, but the healing of our relationship with God. By Adam's fall our relationship to God was ruined. Furthermore, we had no ability to make it right again. Our case was hopeless from the human standpoint. But by Christ's death, it has been put right again.

The effectiveness of Christ's death is further strengthened when we turn to 1 Peter 2:24 and note how Peter alludes to this passage in Isaiah. "And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Notice that Peter on the other side of the cross puts the healing in the past tense. "By His wounds you *were* healed." The healing of our relationship with God was secured at the cross. It was purchased there. The fatal disease of sin defies all human cure. The only remedy was the cross of Christ, and His death has secured a healed and restored relationship with God. Peter does not state this truth in terms of what is potentially true, but what is actually true. He says "you **were** healed." That's why Christ could cry in His last moments on the cross, "It is finished!" His work was perfectly accomplished once and for all then and there. Jesus wasn't just doing His best to heal some folks. His chastisement obtained peace and His scourging secured healing! The cross was not just His best attempt to heal us, as long as He could find some people who would accept what He did of their free will. No, His cross-work actually secured the salvation of all His people. In other words, this text teaches us that Christ did not die to make all men savable. Rather, He died to save *His people* from their sins (Mt. 1:21). Can this truth be substantiated from other clear passages in the New Testament? Indeed it can! Consider these from the book of Hebrews (the most explicit, prolonged teaching in the New Testament on the sacrifice of Christ):

Hebrews 9:12 "and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, *having obtained eternal redemption.*"

Hebrews 10:10,14 "By this will *we have been sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For by one offering He *has perfected for all time* those who are sanctified."

Now, let me ask you, "Who is Isaiah saying was healed?" Well, from what we have learned, it was those who previously despised and rejected Him, but now have come to see His beauty, and understand that He was punished in their place. They have been made willing to confess their sin, and trust that Christ in His death has secured their

healing. Obviously, the ones who were healed are believers in Jesus Christ. One hymn writer has expressed the wonderful truth of the efficacy of Christ's sufferings in these lines:

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its power

Till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more"

Have you ever gloried in the effectiveness of Christ's death? Has this tremendous truth ever gripped your soul and brought you to adoring worship? I pray that it would now as the Holy Spirit applies this wonderful truth to your heart!

There are two truths that emerge from our study in Isaiah 53:4-6. The first concerns the matchless security of the believer. For the child of God there can be a wonderful sense of security in God's love knowing that all his sins have been borne away. The punishment that he deserves has been endured by his Substitute. Now all is peace. His relationship with God is healed. How could anyone be any more secure than the person who knows Christ has paid the penalty for all his sins? In Daniel 9:24 the prophet declares that Christ would "finish the transgression, make an end of sin, make atonement for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness." I don't think our glorious security could be stated in stronger words! Our sins were finished at the cross! He made an end of them -- destroyed them! In their place, He has brought to us everlasting righteousness! If it is true that He made an end of our sins, then there is no more sin that we will ever have to answer for. Oh, glory in the matchless grace and favor of God which He has brought to you through the cross of His well-beloved! August Toplady, writing along these lines declared:

"Payment God cannot twice demand

First at my bleeding Savior's hand

And then again at mine!"

Until God can be unjust and demand two payments for a single debt, He cannot destroy the soul for whom Jesus died! Rejoice and worship!

Another truth that just as clearly emerges from the text is that of the horrible future of the unbeliever. We have seen that Christ endured the full fury of the wrath of God against sin, but what about those who do not trust in His atoning sacrifice? What will be their portion? They will become an eternal, ever-burning, unconsumed sacrifice on the altar of divine justice in the midst of an unquenchable fire! The thought is too painful to endure, but that is what Holy Scripture declares. "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and 'the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.' Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'the Lord will judge His people. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:26-31). If you are not a Christian, lay hold of Jesus Christ! Flee from the wrath to come! Don't let anything stop you. Don't stop in your pursuit of Christ until you know that God has saved you. Anything less will prove eternally fatal.

Chapter 5

The Death Of God's Servant

"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. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth." Isaiah 53:7-9

Up to this point in this great section of God's Word we have witnessed the unfolding progressive work of God's Suffering Servant. First we saw the overall mission of God's Servant. We were told that he would be successful, exalted, humiliated, and fruitful in this mission given Him by His Father. Secondly, we were told of the rejection of God's Servant, who was rejected because He had the wrong origin, appearance and lifestyle. He was all wrong for the job of Messiah, because He wasn't what the people were expecting. Thus He was despised, rejected and lightly esteemed. Thirdly, we are told of the sufferings of God's Servant. These sufferings, we are informed, would be severe, penal, substitutionary, appointed and effectual. Now, in this section of Scripture we are introduced to the death of God's Servant. His mission led to His rejection, sufferings, and ultimately to His death. Notice all the expressions of death in this section. Verse 8 speaks of being "taken away" and "cut off out of the land of the living." Verse 9 speaks of His "grave" and His "death." The Son of God was given a mission. When He came to execute that mission He was rejected. Because He was rejected, He suffered and His sufferings ultimately led to His death.

While our study in Isaiah 53:4-6 was theological in nature, Isaiah 53:7-9 is more historical. While Isaiah 53:4-6 tells us what the substitutionary atonement means, Isaiah 53:7-9 tells us how this atonement took place. This section of Scripture informs us of the injustice, demeanor, purpose and burial of God's Servant in His death.

The Injustice Towards God's Servant At His Death

Isaiah 53:8 informs us, **"By oppression and judgment He was taken away."** The idea here can be restated like this, "By oppressive judgment He was taken away." The judgment others made on Christ was oppressive. He was a victim of oppression. He was spared no abuse. The word "oppression" speaks of being treated harshly and beaten down. This is exactly what took place during Christ's trial. I should have rather referred to it as a mock trial, for in truth it was more like a kangaroo court. This trial was a travesty of justice. The Jewish religious leaders already knew what they wanted to do with Jesus. They were just looking for an excuse to get rid of Him. Notice how John's gospel records the events of that night, "So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that *it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people*" (Jn. 18:12-14). This travesty of justice can be seen clearly in the many different violations of the judicial system which were violated that night. I will just mention four of them.

First, according to Jewish law, there were to be no trials at night. All trials were to be conducted between the morning and evening sacrifices, in order to show that nothing was being done secretly. This trial was held some time between 12:00 midnight and 6:00 a.m.

Second, the person on trial was not supposed to speak in his own defense. Yet this stipulation of Jewish law was lightly swept aside by the high priest himself. In John 18:19-21 we read, "The high priest therefore questioned Jesus

about His disciples, and about His teaching. Jesus answered him, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I said.'" Evidently Jesus knew their question of Him was illegal, and so turned the tables on them, asking them why they were questioning Him when all had heard his teaching openly and in public.

Third, the high priest was not allowed to speak at a judicial hearing. It was felt that a man of such powerful persuasion might easily influence the rest of the judges. In this case, the high priest not only spoke, but served as the prosecutor. "And the high priest said to Him, 'I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, 'He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?' They answered and said, 'He is deserving of death!' (Mt. 26:63-66).

Finally, Jewish law stipulated that in death penalty cases, 24 hours must elapse before execution. This condition was given so that the judges would have time to go home and pray about the judgment before actually executing the criminal. In the case of Christ, in less than 10 hours He was being nailed to a cross! The Jews were not interested in justice. They only wanted Jesus out of the way.

The Demeanor of God's Servant Before His Death

Isaiah 53:7 repeatedly states that Jesus did not open his mouth during this trial. **"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."**

Jesus refused to open His mouth in self-defense. Matthew 27:12-14 states, "And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He made no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, 'Do you not hear how many things they testify against You?' And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so that the governor was quite amazed." The only time He spoke was to prevent any miscommunication from being received. Everything He said brought about His death rather than prevented it.

Jesus also refused to open His mouth in threats. If it were one of us, we might be tempted to say, "You just wait. You'll get yours! You might think you can get away with this, but judgment day is coming!" But from the holy lips of Jesus there was none of that. Instead, notice how the apostle Peter describes his meek resignation to God's will in 1 Peter 2:21-23, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, *He did not revile in return*; while suffering, *He uttered no threats*, but *kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously*."

Furthermore, Jesus refused to open His mouth in complaint against God. He didn't moan and groan about His sufferings and how unjust the Father was to treat Him so. When He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" it wasn't because He was rebelling against His Father's will, but because He deeply felt the loss of His presence.

Our text further describes Christ **"like a lamb that is led to slaughter."** A lamb is willingly led to slaughter because it is ignorant of its impending fate. Likewise, Jesus Christ knew all things, but went willingly anyway. The Bible says He was led; He was not dragged kicking and screaming. All of this speaks of His voluntarily giving Himself up to death. This phrase gives us the picture of an animal who is utterly helpless to save itself from death. That is what Christ

looked like to all around Him, but this was the furthest thing from the truth. When six hundred soldiers came out to arrest Him with clubs and swords He simply said, "I Am!" and they all fell backwards onto the ground. He had to wait around for them to get up to arrest Him. Jesus actually had to help the soldiers arrest Him! Christ wasn't helpless at all, but He surrendered passively into the hands of His enemies.

Isaiah 53:7 goes on to say, **"And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers."** Jesus is also pictured as a sheep before its shearers. This is an apt picture of Christ for, just as a lamb is stripped of its wool by its shearers, so too, Jesus was stripped of His dignity as a man, His rights as a Jewish citizen, His comfort in the beatings, His clothing as it was taken from Him, and finally of His very life. He was stripped of everything!

In all of the events leading up to His death, Jesus is the perfect model of meekness, humility, and quiet resignation to the Father's will. Oh, how true were His words, "I am gentle and humble in heart" (Mt. 11:29). We would do well to learn a lesson from the Master here on how to respond to unjust sufferings!

The Purpose Of God's Servant In His Death

Isaiah 53:7 tells us that **"He was oppressed and He was afflicted."** In Exodus 3:7 the Hebrew word here translated "oppressed" is used for taskmasters whose job it was to exact a quantity of work from the slaves serving under them. In Christ's death, an exaction was made. God's holy law must be satisfied. Justice must be satisfied. The punishment for the sins of His people must be exacted of Him. You see, we had incurred a debt which all the men on earth or the angels in heaven could not pay. Even if we lived perfectly the rest of our lives, there is nothing we could do to pay our past debt of disobedience. Thus, it would appear that the only response of a holy God to our sin must be to consign us to everlasting damnation in hell. The demands of His justice are inflexible. God cannot and will not ignore sin. He must bring His wrath on whomever He finds guilt as an expression of His holy nature. God will not even exempt His own Son if He finds our sins on Him. But thanks be to God, though we were deeply in debt to God's justice and had no way of paying it, Jesus Christ became the surety for His people. A surety is a person who agrees to be legally responsible if another defaults on his debt. All of us defaulted on our responsibility to live in obedience to God and because of this, Christ has fully satisfied God's justice by dying in our stead in order to pay back every last red cent of debt we owed! Hallelujah!

Our text tells us also that **"He was afflicted."** The word is used in the Old Testament of a person who is punished to such an extent that he is bowed down in abject humility. It is used of a woman in the book of Judges who was raped by many men until she finally died. It speaks of being ravaged. Not only was an exaction price made, but Christ humbled Himself to suffer the ravages that our sins deserved. All glory to His holy name!

At this point, a phrase in our text answers an important question as to why Christ was punished. Isaiah 53:8 says, **"He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?"** Whose transgressions is the prophet speaking of? The New American Standard Bible puts the word "my" in lower case letters, indicating that it is the prophet Isaiah who is speaking, but I believe this is incorrect. The word "my" is capitalized to show that it refers to God in the New King James, Young's Literal, and Green's Literal versions. The phrase "My people" occurs 16 other times in chapters 40-66 of Isaiah. In every single instance it refers to God's people. Additionally, every other time the person in Isaiah 52:13 through Isaiah 53:12 speaks in the singular it is God, not Isaiah who is speaking (Is. 52:13; 53:11,12). It seems clear that there should be no exception here. There is little doubt that the text is declaring that Christ would be cut off out of the land of the living for the transgressions of God's people, to whom the stroke was due. This is important, for it establishes the fact that Christ was not going to the cross to die only for the Jews, or for all men without exception. Rather, He was going to the cross to die for a particular group of people -- God's people. Notice how other passages which speak of His death particularize the group for whom He died:

Isaiah 53:12 "He Himself bore the sin of *many*."

Matthew 1:21 "you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save *His people* from their sins."

John 10:15 "I lay down My life for *the sheep*."

Acts 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves, and for all *the flock*, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd *the church of God* which He purchased with His own blood."

Eph. 5:25-27 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved *the church* and gave Himself up for *her*; that He might sanctify *her*, having cleansed *her* by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself *the church* in all *her* glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that *she* would be holy and blameless."

These passages make it clear that God had a special design in the death of His Son. Before the foundation of the world, God gave His Son a people. These people are designated as "His people, the elect, the church, the sheep, and the many." They were committed into His hands and God made Him responsible to come and save *them* by atoning for their sins. Christ, in His sacrificial death, successfully atoned for the sins of all those who will ever be saved. That was the purpose of God's Servant in His death. Hallelujah, He was successful! When He said, "It is finished" He meant it!

The Burial Of God's Servant Upon His Death

Isaiah 53:9 says, "**His grave was assigned with wicked men.**" More than likely, the soldiers had already dug a common grave where Christ would be buried along with the two thieves, as this was the common procedure of the day. Sometimes those crucified were not buried at all, but just left for the wild beasts and birds to devour. Golgotha means "the place of the skull." It may have been given that name because of all of the skulls lying around.

"Yet He was with a rich man in His death." Against all odds, Pilate granted wealthy Joseph of Arimathea permission to bury Him in his own tomb. The moment Christ finished making atonement for sin, God began to exalt Him. Why? **Because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.** God exalted His Son because He was innocent of all the charges made against Him. Violence and deceit were two of the charges the Jews made against Christ (Lk. 23:2,14). In having Christ buried in a rich man's tomb God is saying, "No! He's innocent! I will honor Him in His death, because He is the spotless lamb sacrificed for sinners!" The sinlessness of Jesus Christ is attested by overwhelming evidence. Consider the testimony of:

Judas: "I have sinned by betraying *innocent* blood" (Mt. 27:4).

Pilate: "I find *no guilt* in Him" (stated three times in Jn. 18:38; 19:4,6).

Pilate's Wife: "Have nothing to do with that *righteous* man, for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him" (Mt. 27:19)

The Thief On The Cross: "We indeed suffer justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but *this man has done nothing wrong*" (Lk. 23:41).

The Centurion: "Certainly this man was *innocent*" (Lk. 23:47).

Jesus was buried in dignity and in honor, by being laid in a rich man's tomb. Now suppose that Christ had been buried in a little old shallow grave next to the crucifixion site. If the disciples had said three days later that the body had risen, it could be said that some dog came along and dragged the body away. But He was buried in a rock chamber, with a stone rolled across the front, with a seal of the Roman insignia, and a guard of Roman soldiers. Therefore, when the body disappeared, in spite of these many obstacles, the evidence for Jesus' resurrection becomes clear and forceful indeed. God knew what He was doing in having Joseph bury the body of Jesus!

Chapter 6

The Resurrection Of God's Servant

"But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors." Isaiah 53:10-12

In these series of studies we have been tracing the history of an individual named in this passage as "God's Servant" (Is. 52:13; 53:11). In a very orderly way Isaiah has painted a portrait of this Servant. He has told us of His mission, rejection, sufferings and death. When He came to execute His Father's mission, He was rejected. His rejection led to His sufferings which terminated in His death. But then what? Now that God's Servant has accomplished His task of making atonement for sin, now what? Is that the end? Is that all? Do we leave Him as a forsaken, despised, pierced, wounded, oppressed and afflicted sufferer? No, a thousand times no! God wants us to know that in the final analysis Jesus Christ is not a victim, but a VICTOR! Through His mighty resurrection from the dead He is not just a rejected Messianic candidate, but a co-partner in a divine master plan which will not end in humiliation, but in exaltation. Ultimately the work of this Servant will bring pleasure to the heart of God and satisfaction to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our text informs us, **"If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hands."** But wait a minute! We have previously read that He was pierced, crushed, chastened, scourged, oppressed, afflicted, taken away, and cut off out of the land of the living. We read of His grave and His death. How can it possibly be said that He will prolong His days? After a man is dead in the grave how can He prolong His days? Of course, these words point to the glorious truth of Christ's resurrection from the dead. That is how He is able to see His offspring! After His mission, rejection, sufferings and death, Isaiah chronicles the tremendous triumphs of Christ's victorious resurrection.

This final paragraph centers on the results of Christ's resurrection. They speak of the rewards of His sufferings. Notice the "if, then" clause. "If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring..." This final paragraph of Isaiah 53 is written in the language of a covenant. Surely, it is true that the Father and Son covenanted together before the foundation of the world to glorify themselves in the salvation of a vast number of sinners. The Father and the Son both had a specific part to play. The Son promised to come and represent all those the Father had given Him. He would be born, live, die and rise again on their behalf. He would work out a righteousness for them which would be imputed to them when they believe. He would have their sins imputed to Him, so that when He died their sins would be put away and completely paid for. That's the meaning of, "If He would render Himself as a guilt offering..." The Father promised to do certain things for the Son as a reward for His faithful sufferings and obedience unto death. Our text declares to us this promise in five particulars: the Father promised His Son that He would see His people, accomplish God's pleasure for His people, justify His people, be glorified by His people, and share the

spoils of victory with His people. Upon being raised from the dead, Jesus Christ knew of certain infallible benefits which would accrue to Him. Usually we think of the benefits which accrue to us as a result of Christ's death. Well, the benefits mentioned in Isaiah 53:10-12 accrue to Christ Himself! Notice the certainty of the text. Eight times in these three verses we see the word "will." God promises eight times something "will" happen upon Christ's successful completion of His mission. I want to focus in on five benefits which accrue to Jesus Christ as a result of His finished work and glorious resurrection.

He Will See His People

The Bible says that Jesus will see His offspring. Who are these "offspring?" In verse 11 they are called "the many". In verse 12 they are referred to as "the great," "the strong," and "many". Can we be any more specific as to who these "offspring" are? Well, I believe that Hebrews 2:10 and 2:13 can be of help. There we read, "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing *many sons* to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings... Behold, I and *the children whom God has given Me*." These offspring are the many sons who would be brought to glory. They are the children whom God had given Him. One day in heaven there will be a roll call and our Savior will search to see whether all of His sheep He purchased with His blood are there. At that time, all His sheep will pass under His hand, and He will count them. He will call them all by name, for He knows those He has redeemed in His death. And my friend, *all* of His offspring will be there! None will be missing. All those who were ever born of the Spirit will answer in that day, "Present, and accounted for!" Notice His words in John 6:38-39, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of *all that He has given Me I lose nothing*, but raise it up on the last day." Because of His mighty resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, He will see every one of His blood-bought, blood-born children in glory! What about you? Will you be there to answer the roll?

He Will Accomplish God's Pleasure For His People

We read in Isaiah 53:10-11 that **"the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand."** After Christ was exalted to the supreme position in the universe at the right hand of the throne of God, He was given all authority in heaven and earth to execute God's decrees and counsels. God's good pleasure now would prosper and succeed in His capable, almighty hands. Listen to the way the prophet Isaiah describes this truth in 46:9-10, "Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, '*My purpose* will be established, and I will accomplish all *My good pleasure*.'" In this passage, the purpose of God is parallel to His good pleasure. Thus we see that the purpose of God is the good pleasure of God. When it says that the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in the hands of Christ, it means that God's purpose and decrees will be accomplished as a result of Christ ruling and reigning in the heavens. The running of this universe has been turned over to Jesus Christ. He is God's right hand man and is running the show! We don't have to wait for Him to return to the earth for Him to begin to reign, for the Scriptures teach that He is reigning right now. As a direct result of His sovereign rule over the entire creation of God, He is bringing to pass all of God's eternal counsels and decrees. Not one of God's purposes shall ever be thwarted!

We read furthermore that **"As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied."** The word "anguish" refers to toilsome labor or work. Jesus Christ had a definite work to do. Now, we might not be satisfied with our paycheck after a hard week's work, but Christ is going to be satisfied with His! What does the Bible mean when it says "He will see *it* and be satisfied?" Well, the context demands that the immediate antecedent be the "good pleasure of the Lord." As a result of Christ's toilsome labor, He will see the good pleasure of the Lord accomplished, and this will bring Him supreme satisfaction. What then is this good pleasure of the Lord that He is going to see? It must mean that He is going to see God glorified. Jesus is going to see divine justice satisfied. He is going to see

Satan's kingdom destroyed. Jesus will see God's kingdom established. He is going to see every one of His offspring. He is going to see an innumerable multitude saved from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. Jesus will see the Holy Spirit poured out in the earth. He is going to see the gospel go forth in all the earth. He is going to see gospel churches planted all over this planet. He is going to see the kingdoms of this world become His own kingdom. He is going to see every one of His sheep brought home to His fold. He is going to see every enemy become His footstool. He is going to see the graves emptied on resurrection day. He is going to see death destroyed. He is going to see all the nations standing before Him in judgment. He is going to see the new heaven and the new earth. Furthermore, He is going to see every creature in heaven and in earth bowing before Him confessing that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. That's what He is going to see! And when He sees it, He will be satisfied! Because He has risen, He will see all the Father's good pleasure perfectly fulfilled in time.

He Will Justify His People

In Isaiah 53:11 we read of the glorious truth of justification by faith. **"By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities."**

Notice, first of all *the appropriation of our justification*. We read that it is by "His knowledge" that the many will be justified. Now, this does not mean the knowledge that Christ possesses. Rather, it refers to our knowledge of Him. We appropriate our justification by coming to know Christ. What does it mean to know Christ? It means to possess saving faith. It is to have a personal revelation of Christ made to you from God. Thus, you don't just know a few facts about Christ, but rather, you know Him. A divine, saving relationship has been established. Our text declares that when a sinner comes to know Christ through genuine saving faith He is justified. The next question that must be addressed is, "What does it mean to be justified?" A more important question could not be asked! To be justified means to be declared righteous by God. It is to be given a right standing in God's presence. It is to have every sin taken away and the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to your account. Notice that justification is appropriated by knowing, not doing (Rom. 3:28; 4:4-5). It is received by believing, not behaving, and is obtained by trusting, not performing. The battle cry of the reformers was this very truth -- justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Are you one of the many who have been justified by coming to know Him?

Notice, secondly *the grounds of our justification*. Our text speaks of *the righteous life of Jesus Christ*. The Servant is here referred to as "the Righteous One." Now, that may seem like a minor detail, but the perfect righteousness of Christ is absolutely essential for our justification. If we are to stand in perfection before God we must be clothed with the righteousness of Another. Praise be to God, that is exactly what we have in Christ. He was our representative, not only in His death, but also in His life. Christ not only died for us, but He also lived for us. He exchanged places with us. When we believe upon Him, we receive His perfect righteousness while He takes our sin.

There is another ground of our justification mentioned in this passage as well. It is *the sin-bearing death of Christ*. It is stated in this way, "My Servant will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities." Christ bears our sin upon His own shoulders and carries away our iniquities. How can God justify a guilty sinner? There is only one way. He must take away their sin, and He did that at the cross. There He made an end of sin, and put away iniquity. But whose iniquities did He bear? The Bible says it was the iniquities of "the many" whom he justified. In other words, Christ's justification and sin-bearing are co-extensive. The same group that is justified, is the same group whose sins were borne by Him at the cross. The word "many" is opposed to all. Christ did not bear and take away the sins of every man. If He did, then every man would end up in heaven. He bore the sins of all those He intended to justify; all the many sons He decreed to bring to glory. But the word "many" also is opposed to a few. It may look like He is saving only a few when believers are compared to the lost at any given moment in time. But when all of them have been brought together in heaven, there will be a vast host that no man can number. Now, a dead man can't declare anyone righteous. Jesus Christ had to be raised from the dead in order to pronounce all His believing people just in His sight. Oh, what a

glorious fruit of His triumphant resurrection!

He Will Be Glorified By His People

"Therefore I will allot Him a portion with the great." Interestingly enough, the word for "great" here is the same Hebrew word translated "many" in verse 11. What our passage is most likely teaching us is that as a reward for Christ's perfect obedience and death, the Father would allot Him a portion among all of the millions of sons He would bring to glory. But what portion would the Father give Him? Isaiah 52:13 answers that question for us. There it says, "He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted." Jesus Christ was awarded the supreme position in the universe as a reward for His faithful work at Calvary. In fact, Jesus Christ is going to be the centerpiece of heaven. All the adoring eyes in heaven will be riveted upon Him there. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12). For all eternity He will be the focus of our adoring worship. We won't be able to take our eyes off of Him! For all eternity we will look upon His pierced hands and feet and remember that the *only* reason we are there is because of Him. One certain and infallible result of Christ's mighty resurrection is that He will be glorified for all eternity by His believing people.

He Will Share The Spoils of Victory With His People

Isaiah tells us that **"He will divide the booty with the strong."** The word "booty" describes the spoils of victory a general takes after a military conquest. These spoils might include horses, food, tents, and prisoners of war. Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection was a great Champion. "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him" (Col. 2:15). Christ has triumphed over sin, Satan, death and hell. In His victory He has taken some spoils. These spoils include such things as forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the adoption as sons, the gifts of repentance and faith, spiritual gifts to serve Him and His church, and the glorification of our bodies in the last day. Now from His exalted position in heaven, Jesus divides these gifts to His people. Everything that Christ has received as the fruit of His death and resurrection He grants to us. We are co-heirs with Him! In Hebrews 1:2 we are told that Christ is the heir of all things. If then we are co-heirs with Him, what does that make us? We too, are the heirs of all things. No wonder that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:22 "all things belong to you". Have you ever considered how rich you are? Ephesians 3:8 tells us that we are the recipients of the unfathomable riches of Christ! Begin to glory in your wealth as a recipient of His matchless victory at Calvary!

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Responding To God's Servant

When we see the glorious work of Jesus Christ, what can we possibly say in response? About the only thing we can say is what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:31-34, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." Oh, what a glorious Savior we worship! He is the One who came down from heaven to be humiliated, suffer shame, be rejected, scorned, persecuted, abused, and finally to die. But in His death He ransomed a vast host which no man can number. He paid fully and finally for ever sin they would ever commit. He put away our sins by His successful finished work. But then He rose victorious from the grave, triumphing over death, hell and Satan. And He now ever lives to make sure that they will be with Him in glory! His powerful intercessions bring to pass all of God's eternal purposes. The Sovereign One now rules the universe to accomplish His Father's will. That

sovereign will of the Father cannot and will not ever be thwarted. If you are His child, redeemed by His blood, born of His Spirit, adopted into His family, and justified by His grace you will never perish! Your eternal salvation is as sure as Christ's eternal existence! For any of Christ's sheep to fail to receive the blessings of eternal salvation, Christ Himself would have to fail in His mission and work. That, my friend, can never happen. Jesus was victorious in His work, and will apply that accomplished redemption unfailingly to all of His sheep. That's why Paul goes on to say in Romans 8:35-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Do you see the absolute security of every child of God?! My encouragement to you is to take your eyes off of yourself, and fix them on Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. Look to Him to complete the great work He began in you. Look to Him not only to save you, but to keep you. Look to Him to grant every spiritual blessing you need along the way to heaven. Look to Him and never take your eyes off of Him! He, and He alone is worthy of your spiritual gaze, your adoration, your obedience and worship. Grant Him all that He is worthy of. Prostrate yourself in spirit at His matchless feet in wonder and praise, and then rise to do His bidding to bring glory! Saints of God, glorify Him world without end!