

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Sovereign Servant, Part 1**

Scripture: Isaiah 53:10-12

Code: 90-443

Again, this morning, we have the incredible privilege of looking at the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. This would be message number nine in our study, and I believe that next Sunday morning we'll finish the series with the tenth message. And I have to confess to you that is not one-hundredth of what I have learned about this chapter. And it doesn't even begin to come close to the limitless depths and heights and breadth and length of this amazing portion of Scripture. It is an inexhaustible portion of Scripture, both as to its depth and its extent. One could literally preach a message on every line in this incredible portion of Scripture.

I would also say it is perhaps the single greatest evidence of the inspiration and divine authorship of Holy Scripture, of any portion of Scripture, because 700 years before the arrival of Jesus Christ, it records the details that were played out in His incarnation, His humiliation, and His exaltation. It is an amazing portion of Scripture. And though we have spent ten weeks on it, that is but a taste of this chapter, and I would commend to you that you would in diligence and faithfulness give yourself to this chapter far beyond the conclusion of this series, which is likely to come next Sunday.

The theme of this portion of Scripture that we're looking at, beginning in chapter 52, verse 13, and running through chapter 53, verse 12, is the Servant of Jehovah, the Servant. It is a song of the Servant, the Messiah, who is promised by God to come to bring salvation to His people and to the world. It is the fourth Servant song in this section of Isaiah. There's one in chapter 42, another in 49, another in chapter 50 and then this one, and it is the most powerful and complete of those Servant songs. It is also the most complete and comprehensive prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ anywhere on the pages of the Old Testament. And because we have launched a study titled, "Finding Jesus in the Old Testament," we have first gone here because this is where He is most comprehensively and completely to be found, in Isaiah 53. And though that will be our theme this morning, I don't want to begin there.

I want to begin in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke. So, if you will, turn in your Bible to Luke chapter 24, Luke chapter 24. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke we find our Lord Jesus on the road to Emmaus. He has been crucified but it is now Sunday and He is alive. He has died and risen again. He is walking on the road to Emmaus with a couple of His disciples who are bemoaning the fact that He has died and have no knowledge of His resurrection.

He speaks to them, and we'll pick it up in verse 25. And He says to them, "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? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

The career of the Messiah, says our Lord, falls into two categories. Two great epochs, suffering and glory, humiliation and exaltation. They should have known that because the prophets have spoken that. The Old Testament prophets have revealed that the Messiah would have a career that could be described as suffering and a career that could be described as glory.

Later that same day, Jesus meets with the rest of the disciples. And if you go to verse 44, He says to them, "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." Those were the three sections of the Old Testament familiar to the Jews. "He opened their minds to understand the Old Testament Scripture." And here it comes again, "Thus He said to them, 'It is written that Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day.' "

That was the part that was absent from their messianic theology. They had a theology of glory for the Messiah; they had no theology of suffering. Our Lord has to identify for them that He must suffer; He will suffer. And when He says this, He has suffered. They have no place in their theology for a suffering Messiah. As I have told you, with a thorough inspection of all Jewish literature from the past, there is no evidence that they ever believed the Messiah would come and suffer, let alone as a sacrifice for their sins.

And so again I say, they had a theology of messianic glory that the Messiah would be a king and a great ruler, but no theology of suffering. But Jesus reminds them that the prophets said He would suffer, He would die, He would rise, and He would be glorified. That's the full career of the Messiah. There are those two great realities in His work. He suffers and dies; He rises and reigns. Peter understood this. In 1 Peter chapter 1 in verse 10, he says, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted, the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow."

You cannot understand the person and work of Jesus Christ apart from those two categories: the suffering and the glory. Those are the elements of the career and work of the Messiah, and those two summarize the entire Old Testament presentation of Messiah. They are a summary of Old Testament messianic prophecy. You will find in the Old Testament here and there in the Law, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings, statements about the Messiah's suffering, about His humiliation. They're scattered throughout the Old Testament. You will also find scattered throughout the Old Testament statements about His glory, His exaltation. But nowhere in the Old Testament do the two come together so

clearly with so much detail as they do in the passage before us, Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12.

Here is the most complete messianic prophecy in the Old Testament, details concerning the career of the Messiah 700 years before He arrives, and those details verified in absolute accuracy by history. This is the most complete place to find Jesus in the Old Testament. What we know from this is that there will be two comings of the Messiah. The First Coming, suffering, death, and resurrection; the Second Coming, exaltation and glory. He comes the first time as a sacrifice for sin, the second time as a reigning King of kings and Lord of lords. Both of these are presented by the prophecies of the Old Testament. They are brought together in Isaiah 53 in a way that is almost New Testament, where both of these are clearly laid out from Matthew to Revelation.

Now for our study of Isaiah 53...and you can return to that section...we come to the final stanza, the final of five stanzas in this Servant's song, verses 10 through 12. And here we meet the Servant again, the one identified throughout this section of Isaiah as the Servant of Yahweh, the Servant of Jehovah, the Servant of the Lord, none other than the Messiah. In stanza one, He was a startling, astonishing Servant; in stanza number two, a scorned Servant; in stanza number three, a substituted Servant; in stanza number four, a silent and slaughtered Servant. And now as we come into the final section, we see Him as the sovereign Servant, the sovereign Servant.

To understand the final section, verses 10 through 12, we need to go back to the opening section, verses 13 to 15 of chapter 52. So let me read those two in sequence. Isaiah 52, verse 13, "Behold – " this is God speaking, the Lord Yahweh, Jehovah Himself – "My Servant will prosper, He will succeed, 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 startle 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."

Now that presents a messianic enigma, a messianic enigma to the Jew, to the reader. Here we meet the Messiah, My Servant, the *ebed* Yahweh, the Slave of God, called a slave of God because of perfect obedience. Here we meet Him and we find that He is divine, He is God, because in verse 13 it says, "He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted." All three verbs there used to describe Him are used to describe God Himself in Isaiah 6. And John says in John 12 that the vision in Isaiah 6 of God high and lifted up and sitting on a throne and holy, holy, holy, was a vision of Jesus Christ. So we learned that the Messiah here will be as God is, the very essence of God.

We learned that He will be lifted up, exalted. They had that in their theology of the Messiah. He will startle many nations. He will literally shut the mouths of monarchs and rulers and kings, who will be stunned at the majesty and glory of His presence. They will see in Him things they had never seen and hear from Him things they have never heard. This all fits the Jewish messianic glory theology. He is God. That maybe they didn't see clearly, but it's here. He is exalted. He succeeds. He prospers.

That's what that verb means in verse 13. He conquers the world. He subdues the nations. He says things and does things that have never been said and never been done as He exercises His majesty and His rule.

But there is an enigma in this opening declaration that comes from God and it is verse 14. He is going to be astonished...astonishing for His glory, but He is also astonishing for this most strange reason. His appearance is marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men. Twice it identifies Him as a man. He is God in verse 13, and He is man in verse 14. As God, He is highly exalted, as God should be. And as man, He is disfigured; He is scarred. He is marred so severely that it is beyond any other man, beyond any of the sons of men.

This is an enigma, the enigma of the opening words of this section of Scripture. Who is this? And this is from God Himself. Jehovah God is speaking. Here is mystery; here is the mystery that is impossible at first perhaps to be unraveled, how this glorious person, this startling, stunning, commanding, dominating person can at the same time be marred and scarred, more disfigured than any human being, and ultimately come out of that, in verse 15, and be glorified. Who is this and what does all this mean? Well, we know what it means. The Messiah will both be exalted and humbled. This is Philippians 2. He humbled Himself and God highly exalted Him.

The suffering Servant fits into the purpose of God. And God's purpose is that He would come in humiliation and He would also come in exaltation. Both His humiliation and His exaltation are here promised by God. Yahweh is the speaker; this is God's plan; this is God's promise; these are God's words. The suffering Servant of Jehovah, the disfigured Messiah, is no victim, but rather the victorious Son of God chosen by the Father, empowered by the Spirit for suffering and for glory. How does that happen? Well the answer to the enigma of verses 13 to 15 is chapter 53. This explains both His suffering and its purpose, and His glory and its purpose.

This chapter then, chapter 53, contains the most important truth ever given. The good news of salvation for sinners by the death of the Servant of Yahweh, the only acceptable sacrifice to take away the sins of the world. The amazing revelation contained here begins with God speaking in verses 13 to 15 and it ends with God speaking again, starting in the middle of verse 11 through verse 12. God begins and ends this great prophecy. God promises the plan in 13 to 15, and at the end, in verses 11 and 12, He affirms its fulfillment. And so it is God who has planned both the exaltation and the humiliation of His Servant, the Messiah. What happened to Jesus Christ when He came was in the plan of God, not outside the plan of God. It was the plan of God; it was the purpose of God.

In between the declaration of God's purpose and the affirmation of that purpose, the beginning and the end of this portion of Scripture, comes the section with which we are so familiar, verse 1 through the first part of verse 11. Here is an epoch, penitent confession of the rejection and the hatred of the Servant by a future generation of Jews. We have been establishing that week after week. Starting in

verse 1, all the verbs are in the past tense, and they continue in the past tense. What does that mean? That means this is not a prediction of something in the future; this is a prediction of something in the past.

But it clearly describes the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is in the future. Yes, but the Jews who are making the confession are looking back to it and realizing that they were so wrong. Verses 1 to 11 is basically the content of the confession of the nation Israel in the future when they do what Zechariah says they will do, "Look on Him whom they've pierced and mourn for Him and a fountain of cleansing is open to them and the nation is saved."

This will be their confession. The promise of Israel's future salvation is laid out in Jeremiah 31, and we've looked at that, the new covenant. It's repeated in Ezekiel 36, verses 22 to 29, and we've looked at that where He saves them and gives them a new heart and gives them the Spirit and forgives their sins and puts the knowledge of Himself in them. That's the promise of the future salvation of Israel. It's reiterated in Zechariah 12:13. And all of that is affirmed by Paul in Romans 11:25 to 27, "So all Israel will be saved." Unmistakable promise of the future, national salvation of Israel.

And when that moment comes and the Spirit of grace and supplication comes upon them, as Zechariah describes it, and they all of a sudden are given life and sight and they realize that they had rejected and killed and continued to hate their only Savior, they will turn, reverse their considerations, and the confession will be the very words of Isaiah 53. It is then that they will say He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, chastened, punished for our well-being, scourged for our healing. The Lord caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was led as a lamb to slaughter. He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people to whom the stroke was due. There is a future salvation for national Israel that is promised in the Old Testament and reiterated in the New Testament.

Now just as an aside, some people think that this is perhaps some kind of novel premillennial approach and that many theologians, historically, and certainly amillennial theologians, wouldn't believe this. Look, there is no way possible to escape what the Bible says about the future salvation of Israel. You would have to undo Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah. You would have to undo the preaching of Jesus, the preaching of the apostles, and the book of Romans.

You can't do that. The future salvation of Israel is so clear that if you go back...let's just take, for example...to the time of the Reformers in the seventeenth century and subsequent centuries of Puritans and Reformers, you will find they believed fully in the future salvation of national Israel. No less than John Calvin, who dies in 1564, 16th, says this, "When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, in such a way that the Jews shall obtain the first place according to His eternal purpose. He loved that nation and this He confirms by the remarkable declaration and

the grace of divine calling cannot be made void.”

And Calvin and his friends, working on the Geneva Bible, placed in the notes of Romans 11 this paragraph, “The blindness of the Jews is neither so universal that the Lord has no elect in that nation, neither will it be continual for there will be a time in which they also as the prophets have foretold will effectually embrace that which they now so stubbornly for the most part reject and refuse.” The whole committee of the translators and scholars and theologians that worked on the Geneva Bible affirmed the future salvation of Israel, and so did a long list of Puritan writers that I could quote you for the next 20 or 30 minutes.

This found its way into the thinking of some of the names that you’re familiar with, theologians like Charles Hodge and Robert Haldane, people like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and even before him, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. It was no less than John Owen...1616 to 1683...Owen said this, “Days of prayer and humiliation are kept in Scotland. One particular object being that the promised conversion of God’s ancient people of the Jews may be hastened.” It’s inescapable that this is the truth. All of those who were faithful interpreters of Scripture affirm it. One of my favorite Puritans, Thomas Boston, wrote, “There is a day coming when there shall be a national conversion of the Jews. The now blinded and rejected Jews shall at length be converted into the faith of Christ.”

That’s wonderful news, isn’t it, for us living in the world and seeing what we see in Israel today? According to our dear friend Iain Murray, the same belief concerning the future of the Jews is to be found widely in 17th-century Puritan literature. And I could go on...I won’t...simply to say it’s everywhere. Jonathan Edwards, 18th century in America, affirms the salvation of national Israel. All who are faithful students of Scripture find it impossible to escape that. So, when that happens, as I’ve been telling you, this is what they’re going to say. The very words or words very like them from Isaiah chapter 53.

When that day comes, when that day arrives, they will look again on the One they’ve pierced and they will reverse their opinion. And out of their mouths will come these words of open, penitent confession, the heart of which is this: they will say, “We thought – ” verse 4 – “He was stricken, smitten by God and afflicted for His blasphemies.” Now we know He was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted for our transgressions and our iniquities and our well-being, and our healing spiritually. “And our sins were laid on Him and He was cut off for our transgressions to whom the stroke was due.”

They go through this confession, all the way down to the midpoint of verse 11, and then the final word is left for God. And from the middle of verse 11 through verse 12, God affirms their confession. God affirms that this confession is the true confession. And it is God Himself who says in the middle of verse 11, “Yes, My Servant will justify the many, He will bear their iniquities – ” verse 12 – “He poured out Himself to death, was numbered with the transgressors, bore the sin of many, interceded for the transgressors.” That is God’s final affirmation that the confession that the Jews have made is indeed















