

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ISAIAH Isaiah 52:13-53:12

The Old Testament of the Holy Bible is the most amazing, profound literary work in all of human history. This is not to take away from the message of the New Testament at all. But the New Testament is but a fulfillment of the Old. And the thing that makes the Old Testament unique above all other literature is that it predicts with 100% accuracy events that occurred 100s of years later, some events that occurred over 1000 years later. Today we are going to look at one of those prophecies, which Bible scholars call the prophesy of the Suffering Servant. I have called it the gospel according to Isaiah, for it is a crystal clear portrayal of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world. In fact, it is so clear that this week a preacher friend of mine told me that some Rabbis are now telling their congregants not to read Isaiah 53, for they are afraid that if they do many of them might believe in Jesus and become Christians. Don't you find that ironic, that a Jew is told he can't read part of his Bible, that He can't read part of what God said to him? I can see that backfiring on the Rabbis pretty quickly!

But praise God, we don't have to listen to the Rabbis, so please take your Bibles and turn to Isaiah 52:13, and let's look once more at the greatest story ever told. I want us to look briefly at four precious truths about our Lord Jesus Christ from this wonderful text. And keep in mind that Isaiah was writing about 700 years before Jesus was born. But the first thing that we see is Jesus' **exaltation in the Heavens**. 52:13 tells us that God's Servant, who is Jesus, shall "deal prudently". This literally means that that God's Servant will succeed in His endeavors, that He will prosper. So beside the words "deal prudently" you can write in your margin the word "prosper".

And beloved, I want you to know that ever since Resurrection Morning the Lord Jesus Christ has prospered! For on that day He burst the grave wide open and came out alive forevermore! Isaiah also says that Jesus will be exalted and extolled and be very high. And how gloriously this has come to pass, for 40 days after Jesus' resurrection He ascended into Heaven where He now sits at the right hand of God. After His resurrection Jesus told His disciples "All authority had been given me in Heaven and earth" (Matthew 28:18), and the apostle Paul writes that God has put all things under Jesus' feet (Ephesians 1:22). Beloved, these verses simply mean that Jesus Christ is in charge. He is the Man!!

Young people, you live in a culture that scoffs at the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They don't believe that He is in charge. Now, that's not the way it was in the culture I grew up in, nor even the culture of your parents. I grew up in a culture that pretty much accepted that Jesus Christ was in charge, that He was God in the flesh and the only way to Heaven. Your parents grew up in a culture

that was open to other ways besides Jesus, but He was still respected by most as being one way to God, just not the only way. But you live in a culture that is hostile to Jesus and hostile to God. Many of you watched the Democratic National Convention recently and saw and heard the majority of the delegates' hostility toward God. Despite the ruling of the moderator, all who watched know that they voted to declare they wanted no part of God in their platform. And it was a sad moment for the democrats and a sad moment for America.

But beloved, one day at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Every delegate that that voted to x-out God from the democratic platform will bow and confess, "Jesus, You are God". Every atheist will bow, every agnostic, every Mormon, every Muslim. Every TV talk show host who has said there are many ways to God will bow and say, "Jesus, you are the only way". And friend, you will be in that number, too. You may receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord and bow before Him now, or you may reject Him now and one day bow before Him as your judge, but the Suffering Servant has been exalted, and all the universe will one day be under His absolute, unchallenged dominion.

There is another thing that we see about Jesus in our text, and that is His **persecution on the earth**. Now, even though Isaiah begins with Jesus' exaltation, chronologically His persecution comes first. And Isaiah begins to describe it in 52:14. And he says that Jesus' persecution was nothing less than astonishing. By the time that Jesus was nailed to the cross His appearance was disfigured more than any other human being, from His beard being plucked out, from the crown of thorns, from the blows to His face, from the lacerations on His back. And then, of course, there was the crucifixion itself. It was such a brutal means of death that Roman law forbade any citizen to have to endure it. It was reserved for the dregs of society, the worst of the worst. And that was exactly what the Roman world perceived Jesus to be. A common criminal, in the company with robbers and rebels such as Barabbas. But no one ever physically suffered in death more than the Son of God.

Now look down at 53:3 . This speaks of Jesus' emotional persecution. Friends, no one wants to be rejected! I don't have too many vivid memories of my Jr. high years, but one of the few was not good. I remember being made fun of at a skiing party with a group of my friends, and I remember crying my little Jr. high eyes out and walking back up to the lake house all by myself and hanging out with the father of the boy who invited me to the party. But what would it be like to be mocked and cursed and jeered and spat upon by the very ones that you were dying for? Human minds cannot conceive. There are many of you who've been hurt beyond words by someone that you love or loved. You still bear the pain years and years later. But friends, no matter how severely your heart has been crushed, you've not suffered a thimbleful of the grief that Jesus

suffered when He was despised and rejected by men. So if your physical pain or your emotional pain is sometimes so great you don't think you can bear it another minute, take heart! Jesus has been through it before you. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He knows your pain because He has felt your pain, even greater than you.

And that brings us to the third wonderful truth about Jesus from our text. We've seen His **exaltation in the Heavens**, and His **persecution on the earth**, and now let us look to His **substitution on the cross**. Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God..." That's substitution. Jesus, who was righteous, suffered once for the sins of the unrighteous, you and me, that He might bring us to God. Charles Spurgeon once said, "In one word, the great pillar of the Christians' hope is substitution. Christ Himself was the sacrifice for the guilty".

Some of you may have read the article in the Tuscaloosa News this week that is a good example of substitution. A few years ago a man in Sweden was convicted of smuggling and sentenced to a year in jail. But somehow he talked a friend of his into serving his sentence for him. And his friend did it by reporting to the prison with a fake ID bearing the smuggler's name the day the smuggler was to start serving his time. And they took him right on in and he began doing the time of his friend. And he was exposed only when he was let out on probation after about 2/3rds of the sentence had been completed. Now, that was a very noble or a very stupid thing for that man to do, I'm not sure which. But the sad part of all this, if you want to call it sad, is that it was all for naught, because now there is a warrant out for the smuggler again, and if they catch him he will have two crimes to sit in jail for. Because his substitute was not good enough.

But friends, I declare to you today that if you desire a substitute to bear your sin, you can be sure that Jesus is good enough! Look at verse 4 again. "**Surely** He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows". Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures". Now the Scriptures are the Old Testament. So that verse tells us that the Old Testament and the New Testament both declare that Jesus died for our sins. But the Scriptures not only declare it, but Jesus Himself declares it. Jesus said in 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". But how many did you die for, Jesus? Paul writes in Romans 5:6 that Christ died for the ungodly. So friend, if you consider yourself to be ungodly, you can know for certain that Jesus died for you. The only other alternative is that this Book is a lie, and we will throw it out and leave here and lock the doors and never come back and die without hope.

But because we know that Jesus surely did bear our griefs and sorrows, I want you to see three wonderful blessings that comes all those who will trust Him

as Savior and Lord. First of all, we have **forgiveness**. Isaiah writes in verse 6, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised, or crushed, for our iniquities”. Jesus bore God’s wrath for all of my sins and your sins when He shed His blood on the cross. And Paul writes in Ephesians 1:7, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”. Hallelujah for forgiveness! We no longer have to fear eternal torment in hell. So if you are under that heavy weight of sin this morning, know for a fact that Jesus has already paid for that sin upon the cross, and He is calling for you to confess it and forsake it and be saved today.

But there is something else that Jesus’ substitution brings to us. Not only forgiveness; but also **peace**. “The chastisement for our peace was upon Him”. Beloved, the great thing about salvation is that we not only escape punishment, but we also have been totally reconciled to God. The veil of the temple has been torn asunder. The wall of separation has been torn down. And the Almighty God welcomes us into His presence as His own sons and daughters. So let us come boldly into His presence day by day. Let us rejoice in His presence, for in His presence is fullness of joy. Let us pray big prayers in His presence. And let us rest in His presence in His perfect peace.

Now look at the third thing that substitution affords those who are saved. Not only **forgiveness** and **peace**, but also **healing**. Verse 6 says that by His stripes we are healed. Now, this healing is primarily the healing of salvation (1 Peter 2:24). But beloved, there is so much more healing for those who believe in Jesus than a home in Heaven! Many of you can say, “Jesus touched and healed my body”. Now, we know that it is not God’s will to heal everyone, but it is His will to heal many, and by His stripes we are healed. Oh, but Jesus not only heals our bodies, but Jesus also heals our hearts. We said a few moments ago that Jesus knows all of our heartaches and pains, and He does. But He not only knows but He cares. Peter writes, “Casting all of your cares upon Him, because He cares for you”. And when you do cast your cares upon Him here is His promise. He said, “My grace is sufficient for you”.

The last truth of Isaiah’s gospel – Jesus’ **satisfaction with His Father**. Every word in the Bible is inspired by God. It is all perfect, all supernatural, all a message from Heaven. And yet, as we tour through the pages of Holy Scripture, we come upon breathtaking mountain peaks from time to time. We see a chain of them in the book of John. It was certainly a mountain peak when John wrote, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. The very idea that the God of glory would choose to condescend to become a man is far beyond our ability to comprehend. And we would all agree that the highest mountain peak of them all would be John 3:16: “For God.....” Another peak right up close to the top was when Jesus said in John 17:22 that He had given His disciples the same

glory that the Father had given Him. That blows me away to think that you and I have the same glory upon us as does the Son of God.

But beloved, to me, there is no higher mountain peak in all of the Old Testament than Isaiah 53:10. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him..." Literally, it pleased the Lord to crush Him. Can you imagine? God the Father was pleased to crush His only Son, and as we've said before, this is not just figuratively speaking. This is literal. Jesus said to Peter in John 18:11, "Shall I not drink the cup which **My Father** has given Me?" The Father Himself held the bitter cup of my torment and your torment to the mouth of His Son and said, "Son, drink all of it!" And when Jesus drained the bitter cup to the dregs, God looked at the sacrifice of His Son and said, "I am satisfied!" (verse 11) And beloved, if God is satisfied, then you should be satisfied!