

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Please take God's Word and turn with me to Isaiah 53.
2. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12.
3. "Isaiah 53 describes the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (vv.1-4), His death (vv.5-8) and burial (v.9), and His resurrection and exaltation (vv.10-12)" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Comforted*), and is the most quoted or referred to in the New Testament, being mentioned some 85 times.
4. This chapter graphically describes *The Sin-Bearing Servant* some "800 years before it actually occurs" (Harold Wilmington, *The Outline Bible*).
5. The prophecy begins in chapter 52, verse 13 with verse 13 telling of Christ's exaltation, and the rest of the section dealing with His humiliation.
6. "Early Jewish interpretation of this passage understood the "servant" (52:13) to refer to the Messiah.
7. This also was the interpretation by the early church (cf. Acts 8:30-35).
8. Not until the twelfth century was it suggested that the "servant" of Isaiah 53 was the nation of Israel.
9. But the nation of Israel has not suffered innocently (53:9) or willingly (53:7). Nor did Israel's suffering provide

substitutionary atonement (53:5)” (Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary).

10. So Isaiah 53 is the heart of “the fourth servant song” which comprises chapters 40-66.
11. This morning we’re going to see 2 features of the cross as it is presented here in Isaiah 53.
12. First, *His rejection* in verse 1.

## **I. His Rejection (vv.1-3)**

“The unbelief of Israel is now announced: They saw Him, heard Him, but would not trust Him” (Warren Wiersbe, Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the OT).

In the words of the Apostle John in John 1:10-11:

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”

But before He came, His message was given and Isaiah asks, “Who has believed our report?” (v.1).

“Report” refers to that which is heard – the message. The LXX renders it “Rumour,” or “Message” (Barnes).

The prophets spoke of their coming Messiah but the people would not listen and Stephen rightly asks, “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it” (Acts 7:52-53).

Isaiah says there was a three-fold rejection:

### **A. They Rejected His Words (v.1a)**

“Who has believed our report?”

“The question implied that, in spite of these and other prophecies, only a few would recognize the Servant when He appeared. This anticipation found literal fulfillment at Christ's first advent. Israel did not welcome Him at His first advent (John 1:9-11; 12:38). Paul applied the same prophecy to the world at large (Rom. 10:16)” (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*).

B. They Rejected His Works (v.1b)

“And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

“When God made the universe, He used His fingers (Ps. 8:3); and when He delivered Israel from Egypt, it was by His strong hand (Ex. 13:3). But to save lost sinners, He had to bare His mighty arm! Yet people still refuse to believe this great demonstration of God's power” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Comforted*).

John 12:37-38 says, “But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe 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?”

J. Vernon McGee said, “God's messengers have not been welcomed with open arms by the world. The prophets have been stoned, and the message unheeded. That is still true today. After World War I, when everyone was

talking about peace and safety, it was very, very unpopular even to suggest that there might be another war. Public opinion then demanded that we sink all the battleships and disarm ourselves, because our leaders told us that the world was safe for democracy. There were a few prophets of God in that period, standing in the pulpits of the land. They were not pacifists, but they did not care for war either. They declared in unmistakable terms that God's Word said there would be wars and rumors of war so long as there was sin, unrighteousness, and evil in the world. They stated that war was not a skin disease, but a heart disease, and they were proven correct when we entered World War II. When others declared that Christ was a pacifist, they called attention to the fact that He had said that a strong man armed keepeth his palace. I can recall that the church I attended as a boy had just such a minister. He was a faithful servant of Christ, and he sought to please God rather than men. But his message was largely rejected, and he was not popular with the crowd—they preferred the liberal preacher in the town. But time has now proven that he was right, and current events demonstrate that he was a friend of this nation, not an enemy. He was a prophet of God and could say with Isaiah, "Who has believed our report?" There are a few prophetic voices lifted up right now in America. They are trying to call this nation back to God before it is too late, but the crowd is rushing headlong after another delusion" (Thru the Bible).

1. The "arm of the LORD" is a reference to God's

power (see 52:10; 62:8)

“At His first coming, the nation did not recognize the mighty, incarnate power of God in the person of Jesus, their Deliverer” (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*).

2. Isaiah had been warned of this hardness of heart (6:9-10)

C. They Rejected His Person (vv.2-3)

“In this verse, the prophet describes the humble appearance of the Messiah, and the fact that there was nothing in his personal aspect that corresponded to the expectations that had been formed of him; nothing that should lead them to desire him as their expected deliverer, but everything that could induce them to reject him. He would be of so humble an origin, and with so little that was magnificent in his external appearance, that the nation would despise him” (Barnes).

1. He was not born in a palace; He was born in a Bethlehem stable and He grew up in the despised town of Nazareth

Remember when Philip found Nathaniel in John 1:45-46 and said, “‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ And Nathaniel said to him, ‘Can anything good come

out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”

Nazareth is never mentioned in the Old Testament, in the writings of Josephus or the rabbinic writings. That’s because it “was an insignificant village not far from a major trade route to Egypt. During Jesus’ time it had a population of 1600 - 2000 people” (Harper’s Bible Dictionary).

2. The words “he shall grow up” means “to go up, ascend” and refers to the Messiah growing up in a manner of a shoot or sucker that springs out of the ground”

The imagery is that “it would start, as it were, from a decayed stock or stump, as a shoot springs from a root that is apparently dead” (Barnes).

Before God He grew up “as a tender plant” but before the nation of Israel “a root out of a dry ground.”

“In writing about Israel's future, Isaiah has already used the image of a tree: Messiah is the Branch of the Lord (4:2); the remnant is like the stumps of trees chopped down (6:13); the proud nations will be hewn down like trees, but out of David's seemingly dead stump, the "rod of Jesse" will come (10:33-11:1)” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Comforted*).

3. The “tender plant” refers to a shoot or a suckling and literally means “a little bush” which would spring up from a lower branch

4. The “dry ground” is reference to Israel

“Israel was not a paradise when Jesus was born; politically and spiritually, it was a wilderness of dry ground. He did not come as a great tree but as a "tender plant." He was born in poverty in Bethlehem and grew up in a carpenter's shop in despised Nazareth (John 1:43-46)” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Comforted*).

a) Christ was not a great tree, but a humble bush (Isa.11:1)

b) When He appeared the nation was barren and dry spiritually. They had a form of religion, but they had no life, and because He brought life, they rejected Him

5. Isaiah builds on this imagery and says of the Messiah in verse 2 that “He has no form or comeliness, and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.”

From His place of birth, a stable in Bethlem, to the



place where He grew up, the insignificant town of Nazareth, even His appearance, that was not beautiful and attractive – they all pointed to His humiliation.

Warren Wiersbe says, “His physical appearance was not unusual; there was no splendor or special human attractiveness to the human eye. Of course, to those who know Him, He is the fairest of the fair (Ps.45:1)” (Expository Outlines on the OT).

6. The impression produced by His appearance in verse 5 was rather repulsive, and, to those who measured the great and noble by a merely worldly standard, contemptible

Therefore, verse 3 says, “He is despised (not wanted, looked down upon) and rejected by men (forsaken by His disciples, His nation, and His world). He was “despised, and we did not esteem (not valued highly, not wanted) Him.” And “we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.”

He was a “Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” as seen in John 11:35 where He is weeping over the tomb of Lazarus; and in John 2:16-17 driving the money changers out of the temple because they had made His Father’s house “a house of merchandise!” (v.16).

Hebrews 4:15 sums it up by saying, “For we do not

have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

## **II. His Redemption (vv.4-6)**

Now we come to the passage that describes in detail the sufferings of Christ.

### **A. He Bore Our Grievs and Sorrows (v.4a)**

1. Isaiah begins with a marker for emphasis

“Surely,” means, “Truly! Indeed!”

2. Throughout the passage Isaiah uses the plural pronoun “our” to state that it was because of “our” sin that Christ suffered

- a) He “truly” “borne our griefs”

“Borne” means “to endure suffering”

“Grievs” literally “infirmities” or “bodily diseases,” “sicknesses, anxiety, affliction.” It “does not refer to sin but to suffering” (Barnes).

Mat.8:16-17 says, “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 sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.”

b) He “truly” “carried our sorrows”

“Carried” means to carry as of a burden and has the idea of “carrying burdens” (Barnes)

“Sorrows” means, “pains”

Albert Barnes says, “Perhaps the proper difference between this word and the word translated griefs is, that this refers to pains of the mind, that of the body; this to anguish, anxiety, or trouble of the soul; that to bodily infirmity and disease.”

3. His didn’t die because of some sin He committed

Isaiah says, “Yet we esteemed (reckoned) Him stricken, smitten (struck down) by God, and afflicted.”

Albert Barnes says, “The meaning is, that those who had despised and rejected the Messiah, had greatly erred in condemning him on account of his sufferings and humiliation. 'We turned away from him in horror and contempt. We supposed that he was suffering on account of some great sin of his

own. But in this we erred. It was not for his sins but for ours. It was not that he Was smitten of God for his own sins - as if he had been among the worst of mortals - but it was because he had taken our sins, and was suffering for them. The very thing therefore that gave offence to us, and which made us turn away from him, constituted the most important part of his work, and was really the occasion of highest gratitude” (Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible).

- B. He was Wounded for Our Transgressions and Bruised for Our Iniquities (vv.5-6)

“This verse is filled with the language of substitution. The Servant suffered not for His own sin, since He was sinless (cf. Heb. 4:15; 7:26), but as the substitute for sinners. The emphasis here is on Christ being the substitute recipient of God's wrath on sinners (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:3,4; Heb. 10:9,10)” (John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible).

1. He was “wounded” (v.5a)

“Wounded” Heb.chalal, “pierce” (NASB Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek Dictionary) or “pierce through” (Wiersbe)

- a) His hands and His feet were pierced by nails

- (1) Ps.22:16 - “For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has

enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet.”

(2) Lk.24:39-40 - “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.”

b) His side was pierced by a spear

a) John 19:31-37

b) Rev.1:7 - “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.”

c) He was crucified, which was not a Jewish form of execution (John 12:32-33; 18:31-32). Capital punishment to the Jews meant stoning (Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35-36). If they wanted to further humiliate the victim, they could publicly expose the corpse (Deut. 21:22-23), a practice that Peter related to the Crucifixion (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Peter 2:24)

2. He was wounded for “our transgressions” (v.5b)

“The prophet here places himself among the people

for whom the Messiah suffered these things, and says that he was not suffering for his own sins, but on account of theirs” (Barnes).

“Transgressions” Heb.pesha, “rebellion, sin, trespass” (Strong). “The noun signifies willful deviation from, and therefore rebellion against the path of godly living” (W.E. Vine).

- a) 2 Cor.5:21
- b) Heb.9:28 - “Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”
- c) 1 Pet.2:24 - “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed.”

Albert Barnes makes an important point here in Isaiah: “The reason why he thus suffered was, that we were transgressors. All along the prophet keeps up the idea that it was not on account of any sin of which he was guilty that he thus suffered, but it was for the sins of others - an idea which is everywhere exhibited in the New Testament.”

- 3. He was “bruised for our iniquities” (v.5b)

“Bruised” means properly to be broken to pieces, to be bruised, to be crushed.

Applied to mind, it means to break down or crush by calamities and trials; and by the use of the word here, no doubt, the most severe inward and outward sufferings are designated.

The Septuagint says 'He was rendered languid,' or feeble. The same idea occurs in the Syriac translation. The meaning is, that he was under such a weight of sorrows on account of our sins, that he was, as it were, crushed to the earth.

“On the cross, Jesus Christ was "bruised," which means "crushed under the weight of a burden." What was the burden? "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6; see v. 12; 1:4). Sin is indeed a burden that grows heavier the longer we resist God (Ps. 38:4)” (Wiersbe).

The rest of verse 5 highlights the extent and purpose of His suffering: “The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

He was "chastised" and given many "stripes," and yet that punishment brought us peace and healing.

The only way a lawbreaker can be at peace with the law is to suffer the punishment that the law demands. Jesus kept the Law perfectly, yet He suffered the whipping that belonged to us.

Because He took our place, we now have peace with God and cannot be condemned by God's law (Rom. 5:1; 8:1).

The "healing" in Isaiah 53:5 refers to the forgiveness of sins, not the healing of the body (1 Peter 2:24; Ps. 103:3).

Sin is not only like a burden, but it is also like a sickness that only God can cure (Isa. 1:4-6; Jer. 30:12; Nahum 3:19) (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Comforted*).

C. The Sinful Condition of Humanity (v.6)

1. We are like sheep that go astray

a) When Jesus saw the crowds, He saw them "like sheep having no shepherd" (Mat.9:36).

b) When describing our lost condition, Peter quotes from Isaiah 53:6 and says, "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Pet.2:25).

"All we (kullanu, all of us) is both the beginning and ending word of this verse. The comparative like sheep is used to illustrate the desperate condition of mankind. Because of our spiritual blindness (similar to the near blindness of sheep)



and our lack of a shepherd for our souls, we sinners have the constant tendency to go astray (ta ?iyn?, pluperfect, we had turned astray). Notice that all and every are used in parallel, emphasizing the totality of sinful humanity. Our own way is used in parallel with gone astray. Thus, in light of the imagery the force of the passage is clear. Since sheep are especially prone to wander off with little or no sense of direction and cannot find their own way home, they serve as a perfect illustration of lost and sinful humanity which, in and of itself, cannot come to the Saviour without divine assistance” (KJV Bible Commentary).

2. “We have turned, every one, to his own way”

“Every person has sinned (Rom. 3:9,23), but the Servant has sufficiently shouldered the consequences of sin and the righteous wrath deserved by sinners (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5,6; 4:10; 1 John 2:2). The manner in which God laid our iniquity on Him was that God treated Him as if He had committed every sin ever committed by every person who would ever believe, though He was perfectly innocent of any sin. God did so to Him, so that wrath being spent and justice satisfied, God could then give to the account of sinners who believe, the righteousness of Christ, treating them as if they had done only the righteous acts of Christ. In both cases, this is substitution” (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*).

3. “And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” – the most beautiful words in the Bible!
  - a) David said in Psalm 32:1-2, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.”
  - b) Romans 4:4-8 - “4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 7 Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

## **CONCLUSION**

“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”