

Isaiah 53A 2013

EXPLAIN: Last year I attended the Expositor's Conference and I had the privilege of sitting under the teaching of Dr John MacArthur. He taught a series of messages from the book of Isaiah. As soon as I heard them I knew I had to share his insight with you this Easter season.

- So I must confess that what I am about to share with you are not my original thoughts. I don't know that I have ever had an original thought. BUT God has provided great teachers.

The Book of Isaiah is the greatest of all the Major Prophets in the O.T.

- Isaiah's prophecy begins at a time of peace and prosperity in the land of Israel at the end of the reign of the great King Uzziah. (52 yrs, prosperity, peace, strong defense)
- Isaiah's prophecy continues through the decline of the nation during the reigns of Jothan, Ahaz, Hezekiah and finally comes to an end in the wicked reign of Manasseh. The historic record tells us that Isaiah was put to death, sawn in two by Manasseh.

You may find it interesting to know that: The Book of Isaiah contains 66 chapters. It is actually reflective of the Bible which contains 66 books.

- Interesting also that the book of Isaiah can be broken into 2 sections: The first section containing 39 chapters and the last 27 chapters. (sound familiar?) This is the same as the Bible which is broken into Old Testament 39 books and New Testament 27 books.
- The first 39 chapters of Isaiah warn of a coming judgment and captivity that finally came to pass at the hands of the Babylonians. (605, 589 BC)

The first section of Isaiah ends with this pronouncement:

Isaiah 39:5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 6 Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD.

Like the first 39 chapters of Isaiah the first 39 books of the Bible leave man with the troubling expectation of judgment. Because Man cannot abide by the Law of God, he is captive to sin and therefore given over to the righteous judgment of God.

The Second section of Isaiah contains 27 chapters and it speaks clearly of the grace and salvation that God will provide through the Messiah who is spoken of as "The Servant of God."

Isaiah 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

Listen to how the SECOND section of Isaiah BEGINS:

Isaiah 40:1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

3 A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

It should be no surprise to you that the New Testament (27 books) begins with the same declaration that is found in the last 27 chapters of the book of Isaiah:

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’” 4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

As if that were not enough, the Book of Isaiah also ends where the New Testament ends: Isaiah 65:17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.

Revelation 20:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

The name “Isaiah” means – Salvation is of the Lord.

Nowhere in the entire Old Testament is salvation from sin made more clear than in the 53rd chapter of the Book of Isaiah.

- Many who study the text call Isaiah the 5th Gospel.

Martin Luther said, “Every Christian should be able to quote Isaiah 53 by heart.”

LOTS of introduction: Here is the PLAN: it will take all week (The titles are not original)

There are 5 points that will be covered in 4 sermons throughout the coming week.

1. The Startling Servant (Today)
2. The Scorned Servant (Today)
3. The Substituted Servant (Thursday)
4. The Silent Servant (Friday)
5. The Sovereign Servant (Easter Sunday)

The Startling Servant

Isaiah 52:13 Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. 14 As many were astonished at you his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind— 15 so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.

Have you ever seen a movie, or read a book that actually opens up at the end, the first scene actually reveals the conclusion and THEN, after showing the end, the progression of events leading up to the finale is methodically portrayed.

(movies like that are sometimes hard to follow)

“Behold” draws attention to the figure and person of God’s Servant and exalts his WISE and EFFECTIVE actions. shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.

God’s servant uses the best means to obtain the highest ends. His success is the result of prudent, effectual undertaking.

- It is necessary at the outset to draw attention to the Servant’s wise dealings because in the subsequent verses the servant is despised, viewed with contempt.
- Who ever heard of a suffering hero? A conquering king shouldn’t be one who is beaten beyond human recognition!

Here in 52:13, we get a brief glance at the eventual exaltation of the Servant of the Lord. “he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.”

- You could say that the EXALTATION of Christ actually brackets the entire passage. At the beginning and at the end, the Servant is exalted:

(The End) Isaiah 53: 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Like Isaiah, the Apostle Paul moves the Philippian believers from pre-incarnate glory through deep humiliation all the way back to immeasurable, unconceivable glory.

Philippians 2: 6 who, though he was in the form of God, (glorious) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, (voluntary humiliation) taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- From the initial statement depicting the Servant’s glorious exaltation Isaiah immediately plunges into a consideration of His deep despair.
- As HIGH as the exaltation and glorification extend for the Servant of God so also his humiliation will likewise be immeasurably deep.

Isaiah 52:14 As many were astonished at you his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

- The word “Astonished” suggests a disturbing even paralyzing reaction to the appearance of the Servant.
- This reaction is the same as one who might stumble upon the mutilated corpse of one who was beaten beyond human recognition.
- Those who look upon the terrible disfigurement of the servant were appalled and struck with awe because they considered his disfigurement to be a punishment for his own sins.
- That is IMPORTANT! They considered his disfigurement to be a punishment for his own sins. He must have deserved this!

Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

- The leaders of Israel convinced themselves that Jesus was a malefactor, a blasphemer, that he greatly endangered the nation Israel by falsely claiming to be the Messiah, God's appointed King.
- He didn't act like a King, he surrounded himself with NOBODIES, illiterate fishermen and tax-collectors. He chose to eat with publicans and sinners.

Moving from verse 14 to vs 15 Isaiah tells us the REAL purpose behind the Servants tragic disfigurement.

- The purpose: "so shall he sprinkle many nations;"

This idea of "SPRINKLING" is found in the Mosaic Law as a purifying rite.

- Cleansing – Leviticus 14: 7 And he shall sprinkle it (blood) seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease. (Lev 4:6 – cleansing the altar)
- Here the Servant of the Lord will cleanse many nations...

Isaiah 52: 15 so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.

- So the work of God's Servant would provide cleansing for MANY nations.
- MANY within those nations, those outside of Israel, the uttermost parts of the earth, those who did not grow up with the Word of God will have the truth revealed to them by God.

This word "MANY" is one of the key words to the text: it is used 5 times in 52: 14 - 53:12:

Isa 52:14 As many were astonished

Isa 52:15 So shall he sprinkle many nations;

Isa 53:11 By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. (the gift of righteousness IMPUTED to many)

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,

Isa 53:12 (He) was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

- In Isaiah 53, "Many" refers to the beneficiaries of the Servant's astonishing atonement.
- Here is a thought for those of you who are more theologically astute: Using the word "MANY" actually limits the affects of Christ's atoning work, (bearing sin, cleansing and gift of righteousness) to a remnant or segment of men rather than the whole of mankind.

Moving into Chapter 53 and to the "Scorned Servant" we immediately come upon a lament an expression of deep sadness and sorrow, a song of great regret and repentance.

(read with a tone of great remorse)

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

This expression of remorse is coming from the heart of someone who previously DID NOT believe; someone who wonders aloud, "*WHO could possibly have seen the strong arm of the Lord in such an obscure and despised vessel as the Servant of the Lord.*"

- The repentant people making their confession with these words begins by expressing what they believed to be true about the Lord Jesus:
 - He had a contemptible Origin
 - He had a contemptible Life
 - He had a contemptible Death

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

- Who really believed the reports, the announcements that this, Jesus was the Messiah?
- WHERE was the powerful display of God's Almighty arm that we read about?
- We expected he would be a strong OAK but we saw a sucker branch, a sapling.

Contemptible Origin

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground;

- Young Plant – (Hebrew – YOWNEK) Sucker branch - That worthless appendage that grows from the vine but never produces anything. This branch is unnecessary, unwanted, unimpressive. This was their opinion of Jesus.

He was from Nazareth, (*can anything good come out of Nazareth*) born in a feeding trough, of questionable parents, his birth was announced by shepherds, the lowest of lows socially. He was a nobody, from nowhere, who amounted to nothing.

Contemptible Life:

he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

- Jesus didn't act like a King, he surrounded himself with NOBODIES, illiterate fishermen and tax-collectors. He chose to socialize with publicans and sinners
- There was nothing stately or regal about Him. He didn't have an impressive appearance like King Saul (a handsome man who was head and shoulders above everyone else) Now that was a king!

Contemptible Death:

3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

- Instead of victoriously removing the Roman oppressors and ascending to the throne in Jerusalem, he was arrested, beaten and crucified. Like a common criminal.
- His end was sorrowful, like his life, when he walked by on the Via Delrossa I had to cover the eyes of my kids.

we esteemed him not

- Even though He was eternal God come in the flesh.. we esteemed him not!
- Even though he created all things.. We esteemed him not (didn't even give him a thought)
- Even though he graciously provides us with all that we need for life...(never gave thanks)
- Even though he carried our sins and bore our punishment – we rejected him.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was

crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

I believe that this is the voice of someone who is looking back at the CROSS, someone who previously was totally blinded to the substitutionary atonement of Christ for sin, someone WHO is seeing the truth about the Servant of God for the very first time.

- That could be anyone of US. When God first opened our eyes to the truth of the Gospel. When we were born from above and first experienced the cleansing that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

BUT the context of Isaiah 50 – 65 fits the nation ISRAEL specifically in the Last Days. And I believe that this confession of remorse is prophetic describing the repentance of Israel when God finally opens their eyes to see the one who they pierced: Just as Zechariah prophesied:

Zechariah 12: 10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Zechariah 13:1 “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.