

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

In the Old Testament, God called the nation Judah, "My servant" – but they failed to serve Him faithfully. Thus in the New Testament God did a new thing. He chose another servant – who would be faithful – His Son Jesus.

Chapters 49-52 discuss the Father's Suffering Servant. These chapters reveal details about the cross of Jesus that were left out of even the Gospel narratives. For example...

Isaiah 50:6, "I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting." Here's a detail of the crucifixion not mentioned in the Gospels – not only was His back beaten to ribbons, but His beard was plucked out. Imagine the pain!

When Zack and Natalie were little I wore a beard, and as babies do they'd reach their hands up into my beard and the grabbing reflex would kick in. They'd give my beard a jerk, and wow, it stung! Imagine, ripping the hair from the flesh.

In 52:14 Isaiah takes it one step further. "His visage was marred more than any man..." Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch translate the line, "so disfigured, His appearance was not human..." Apparently, Jesus was beaten beyond recognition. His face didn't even look human. He looked like a boxer after a 15 round slugfest. Guys, if the disciples had held a funeral for Jesus it would've been *closed casket*.

Perhaps it was severe facial scarring that kept Mary from recognizing Jesus after His resurrection. When He appeared, she thought He was the gardener. Jesus bore the scars in His hands and feet, so why not His face?

Isaiah 53 focuses on the *suffering Servant*.

Martin Luther wrote, "If you want to understand the Christian message you must start with the wounds of Christ." And there's no better place to go to see those wounds than Isaiah 53. The passage is prophetic, but when you read it you get the impression, Isaiah was an eyewitness – standing at the foot of the cross.

In verse 3 Isaiah calls Jesus, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief..."

He says in verse 4, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." The Jews stumbled over the cross. Deuteronomy 21:23 says, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." The cross was considered by the Jews to be a sign of God's rejection. What they didn't consider was the possibility that Jesus didn't die for His own sin, but as a substitute. Every time a lamb was sacrificed it was substitutionary, so the Jews were certainly

aware of the concept. Isaiah's contention was that Jesus would die in our place.

In verse 5 he explains the details, "But He was wounded for our transgressions (He was pierced with iron spikes), He was bruised for our iniquities (the Romans beat Him with their fists and rods); the chastisement for our peace was upon Him (the Jews laid 39 lashes on Jesus' back with a cat-o-nine-tails), and by His stripes we are healed."

Obviously, God could've sent Jesus to die for our sins at a time when capital punishment was carried out by more humane means – maybe a lethal injection, or the gas chamber, maybe the firing squad, even the guillotine. All the above are designed to do the job quickly, unlike the torture involved in Roman crucifixion.

Jesus died the most hideous, barbaric, torturous, bloody death imaginable. For at least two reasons: The cross shows *the severity of our sin...* but it also shows *the severity of God's love*. Look at the cross of Christ and it makes 2 statements: *Here is what my sin deserves, but God loves me enough to pay my penalty.*

The famous hymn, "Beneath the Cross of Jesus", expresses *theology through poetry*, "Upon the cross of Jesus, mine eye at times can see, the form of One, Who suffered there for me. And from my stricken heart with tears, two wonders I confess, the wonders of redeeming love, and my unworthiness."

Verse 6 says it again, "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."

Verse 7 continues the prophecy, "as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth..."

When Pilate asked Jesus, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" We're told, "He answered him not a word, so that the governor marveled greatly." So would anyone who knew Isaiah 53.

Verse 8 mentions His death. Verse 9 predicts His burial in a rich man's grave. Verse 10 even predicts Jesus' resurrection, "He shall prolong His days."

There's a great joke about Jesus' burial that communicates a great truth. The rich man, Joseph, who owned the tomb was asked by Pilate, "Why give your tomb to a criminal?" Joseph answered, "Oh, don't worry, it's only for the weekend."

And indeed it was! On the first day of the week Jesus had cleared out forever!

Bible Scan - Isaiah 40-66

NEW HEBREW TESTAMENT

CYRUS AND BIBLE PROPHECY

Isaiah 44:28 and the 45:1 refer by name to the king of the east who will liberate the Jews from Babylon. Isaiah calls him "Cyrus".

The Persian king won't be born for 100 years - the fall of Babylon another 160 years - which makes the mention of the name *Cyrus* one of the most amazing prophecies in all the Bible.

We're told by the Jewish historian, Josephus, that when Babylon fell to the Persians, Daniel showed Isaiah's prophecies to Cyrus. He was so impressed, that one of the king's initial decrees was to permit the Jews to return to Judah. Cyrus even paid for the rebuilding of the temple with money from his own treasuries.

Isaiah 45:6 explains the purpose behind this astonishing prophecy, "That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other..." Prophecy reveals God's eternal nature. God says of Himself in 46:10, "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure...'"

You and I live on the timeline. The words "*past*" and "*future*" are meaningful to us. But God lives outside of time altogether. And the way He demonstrates that to us, is by declaring an event before it happens.

Prophecy is a powerful tool to convince the world of God's omniscience and omnipotence - and the Bible is full of prophecy. Predictions about people, cities, events. Over 300 Old Testament prophecies describe the first coming of Jesus.

In his book "Science Speaks", Peter Stoner, calculates the odds of just 8 of the 300 prophecies being fulfilled by a single man. It's a chance of 1 in 10^(17th). That's the equivalent of filling the state of Texas two feet deep in quarters - marking one red - stirring'em all up - then blindfolding a person and asking him to pick out the marked quarter. And that's the odds of one man fulfilling just eight prophecies - that's not even factoring in the other 292 Messianic prophecies.

Guys, biblical prophecy challenges the skeptic with powerful evidence for the existence of God. We need to learn and share the prophecies of the Bible.

Devotion Box - Passing Through

In Isaiah 43:1-2 God makes a powerful promise to Israel... "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters..." Here's a key phrase. God doesn't promise we'll sail *over* the waters, but neither will we go *under*. We'll go *through*. Trials are inescapable, but God promises us what's needed to get us through.

"I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you."

The last half of the verse reminds us of Daniel 3 - and the three Hebrews God delivered from the Babylonian furnace. No matter the trial the Lord promises to get *you through*. Come tide, flood, or fire - the Lord is able!

Devotion Box - A New Thing

I love verse 19, "Behold, I will do a new thing..." God is always working in new and surprising ways. He loves to break the mold. Try to confine Him to a box, and He'll blow out the sides. Walking with God is life of surprises. It's an adventure.

I love how The Living Bible translates verse 19, "But forget all that - it is nothing compared to what I'm going to do! For I'm going to do a brand new thing."

THE FIRST AND LAST

Jehovah, God of Israel, makes a statement in 44:6 that has important ramifications, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.'"

Understand there's only *one first*, and only *one last* - yet Revelation 1:17 uses the exact terminology in reference to Jesus. Either there's a contradiction or Jesus and Jehovah are one in the same. Here's a proof text for the Triune nature of God.

When a Jehovah Witness comes to the door I love to point out Isaiah 44:6 and Revelation 1:17. In their own heretical translation they've doctored the passages that blatantly teach Jesus and the Father are one - but here's a way to slip in the back door. Take their own translation, and make the point. It blows their minds.

Devotion Box - When God Shouts

The Lord says in verse 14, "I have held My peace a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself. Now I will cry like a woman in labor, I will pant and gasp at once." For millenniums, God has watched as the wicked prospered - as the righteous were persecuted - yet He held His peace. But the day will come when God will settle all scores. He'll right the wrongs. He'll reward the humble.

Heaven won't be silent forever. One day He'll shout like "a woman in labor".

Devotion Box - Eagles' Wings

The last verse in Isaiah 40 is a favorite, "those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." A Christian is a rechargeable battery. When we run low of energy we can plug into the Holy Spirit for a fresh surge.

And the way to plug into the power is to wait on God. Think of waiting on God as a waiter serving a table in a restaurant - he's attentive, compliant, engaged.

Wait on God in the same manner and He'll give you *energy, elevation, and endurance*. He'll renew your spiritual vitality so you can *step up*. He'll give you wings of spiritual vision so you can *look up*. And he'll help you run with spiritual valor so you can *keep up*. There's help available to those who wait on God.

Devotion Box - Theology and Pride

In Isaiah 55:8-9 God says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." The word "*theology*" means "*the study of God*", but the first truth our study uncovers is that God is infinite. And since man is finite, this creates a problem for the theologian. How does a finite mind comprehend an infinite God? We're immediately faced with our limitations.

Yes, God reveals truth I can grasp, but He Himself remains beyond my ability to comprehend. His ways are higher! His thoughts are deeper! I can only come humbly and grasp what He's revealed. There is no room for arrogance.

I use to struggle with my limitations until I realized - if I could understand, with my pea-brain, all there is to know about God He really wouldn't be much of a God. The fact I can't understand all His ways causes me to trust Him more.

Too many theologians want to know it all. They're like the little boy who told his mom he was going to draw a picture of God. She said, "But no one knows what God looks like." He answered, "They will when I get through with this picture!"

Guys, never forget we're kindergarteners in the University of God. Don't get frustrated with the mysteries of God. Don't bail out when you run across threads of theology you can reconcile. "What's over my head is still under His feet."

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

Verses 20-25 gives us a glimpse of life in the Kingdom Age, "No more shall an infant live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old..." Note, a person 100 years old is still considered a kid. I believe people will live as long as they did before the flood. Verse 22 tells us, "For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people."

The Kingdom Age will be a unique time. The Earth will be shared with saints like us - folks who either died or were raptured, and have already received their glorified bodies - along with sinners who survived the Tribulation. This is the time when resurrected believers will reign and rule over the earth's mortal inhabitants.

The remainder of the chapter describes how the curse of thorns and thistles will be lifted. The Earth will be transformed into an Eden. God will even end the hostility between the animals... "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together."

Devotion Box - How Jesus Treats People

In 42:3 is quoted of Jesus in Matthew 12:8, "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench..." This is how Jesus treats people... Look at the river reed that's been beaten down by the wind, or the torch made of flax that's about burned out. Rather than focus on what's been lost, Jesus takes the little that's left, and nurses it to health. Jesus props up the person who's been beaten down by life. *He's a splint*. He fans the flame of the person who's tired and burned out. *He's a flint*. Jesus is a *splint and a flint*. He's the great encourager!

Devotion Box - The Heart of God

When Babylon sacked Jerusalem and took the Jews into exile many accused God of forsaking them. Isaiah deals with their complaint in 49:15, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me."

A mother would sooner forget her nursing child than God forget His people. I have four kids, and I've noticed each time how my wife becomes preoccupied with the welfare of her baby. She's consumed with the needs of that infant.

Throughout the Scriptures God portrays Himself as a "*Father*", but Isaiah 49:15 says to me that God is a *Father with a mother's heart*. He's strong and firm and decisive like a father, but He's also soft and gentle and tender like a mother. God has a father's hands, and a mother's touch.

MODERN ISRAEL IN ISAIAH

Also in chapter 43 the Lord promises to bring back His people to their land. Verses 5-6, "I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth..."

After World War 2 and the Holocaust, European Jews flocked to Israel from the west. Once the Jewish state was formed, Jews came from the east and the Arab countries. In the early 1980s the Falasha Jews of Ethiopia were airlifted from the south. And in the 1990s Russian Jews streamed into Israel from the north. The prophecy in these verses has been fulfilled in our own generation.

Isaiah 60 tells us that during this time the tiny country of Israel will dominate the globe. Verse 12, "For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish." It's ironic, but the most battered and bloodied and maligned and hated nation on earth for the last 4000 years, *Israel* - will in the end rule over the whole earth.

Isaiah 66:8 records an incredible prophecy, "Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children." Isaiah looks to the future rebirth of the state of Israel. He describes the momentous occasion as "*a nation born in a single day*".

And that's exactly how it happened. Five months after the United Nations voted to partition Palestine, and make room for a Jewish state, the nation was born.

On May 14, 1948, Jews in Palestine declared statehood. Without war, or coup, or civil war - as Isaiah said *without labor pains* - the nation Israel was birthed.

Never in the history of the planet has a nation been reborn after 1900 years of exile. The nation Israel is a bonafide miracle. *It's a nation born in a day!*

Bible Scan - Isaiah 40-66

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - November 19, 2000 - Have a Happy Thanksgiving - Sunday PM 11/26 Communion and Thanksgiving Service - Ladies Christmas Tea, Sat 12/9, 2:00 pm (tickets are on sale today)

Next Bible Scan - January 7 - Jeremiah 1-28

"But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." - Isaiah 40:31

Bible Scan
Memory
Verse

WHEN RIGHT IS WRONG

Isaiah 58 uncovers Judah's hypocrisy. As she fasts and prays and acts so pious, she oppresses her workers, and is driven by greed. She's religious on the outside, but wicked on the inside.

God says to His people in verse 6 if you want to fast here's how: "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?" God desires mercy and kindness more so than mere religious observance.

Isaiah 58 is a word to America's Religious Right. Don't expect God's support if your agenda is all about prayer in public forums, vouchers for private schools, and tax cuts. God cares more about social reform for the poor and oppressed.

Devotion Box - Never Out of Reach

Pay close attention to the first two verses of chapter 59, they may be for you... "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." The reason you feel estranged from God is not His inability, or unwillingness to save. God is both able and willing. No matter what you've done - no matter *how low you go* - God's arm is long enough to reach.

The problem is in verse 2, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." Your sin has created a gulf between you and God. God wants to save, but it's your choice. Will you repent, and trust in Jesus for a pardon?

THE BLOODSHED IN BOZRAH

In Isaiah 63 The Lord Jesus is seen coming out of Bozrah. Remember Bozrah was the city of Petra, near the Dead Sea. It's the sight where the Jews of the last days will run to escape from the Antichrist. Now here comes Jesus out of Bozrah.

CNN's Wolf Blitzer is on the scene. Here we have *an end time interview*.

In verse 2, Wolf asks Jesus why His robe is red? And Jesus tells him in verse 3, "I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled on My garments... For the day of vengeance is in My heart..."

Notice what Jesus says in verse 5 to the correspondent, "I looked, but there was no one to help... Therefore My own arm brought salvation..." Jesus rescues Israel because He sees no one defending His people. Traditionally, the United States has supported Israel. Apparently, by this time either that support has eroded, or we'll no longer be militarily capable to fight.

The good news for Israel is we won't be needed. The Lord Jesus will return, and when He does He'll destroy the Antichrist with the brightness of His coming, He'll touch down on the Mount of Olives, and He'll liberate the Jews held up at Bozrah. He'll come to Jerusalem, and establish His throne on the Temple Mount. It'll be a CNN Special Report on the Battle for Jerusalem. "*Crisis in the Middle East*" finally over. Jesus saves the day, and ol' Wolf will have lots to howl about!

THE TWO COMINGS OF JESUS

Isaiah 61 opens with the words Jesus quoted at the synagogue in Nazareth when he revealed to the people the purpose of His mission. In the mind of Jesus here was a perfect description of His mission.. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD..."

But that's where He stopped... here are His intentions. His agenda then and now. He's the same yesterday, today, forever! Guys, Jesus has no ulterior motives other than to heal, and free, and pardon. Jesus didn't come into the world to judge or condemn. He came to save and help. Today He's building people not empires. A spiritual not a physical kingdom.

But Jesus will finish the verse. At the end of the age, when He comes again, He'll bring "the day of vengeance of our God..."