

06.03.2021 DOING THE UNTHINKABLE

“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.” Isaiah 53:4

This week we study the redemptive work of Christ the Messiah, as prophesied by Isaiah. In Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 is the supreme revelation of the gospel in the Old Testament. Isaiah describes in detail the substitutionary and inclusive death of Christ and the blessings it bestow upon all mankind.

Isaiah also describes man’s greatest problem: unbelief. To fallen humans with their self-centred natures, it is indeed beyond comprehension (unthinkable) that the second Person of the Godhead should humble Himself to becoming a Man, undergo the humiliation of crucifixion and taste the second death for every son of Adam (1 Corinthians 15:21, 22).

Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:5-8

Isaiah’s Testing Truth: Isaiah 50:4-10

In the previous chapter 49, Isaiah speaks of the Servant to come. In this passage, the Servant Himself speaks.

“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened My ear and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away.

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.

“For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. He is near who justifies Me; who will contend with Me? Let us stand together. Who is My adversary? Let him come near Me.

Surely the Lord God will help Me; Who is he who will condemn Me? Indeed they will all grow old like a garment; the moth will eat them up.” Isaiah 50:4-9

From this passage we learn that Messiah is One who speaks words of comfort to those who are weary. He is One who listens, learns the will of God and does not rebel. He obeys even though it is at great personal cost, and through it all, has confident faith in the Sovereign Lord.

“Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God.” Isaiah 50:10

As God’s people we are called to obey the voice of His Servant. If we obey the Servant, our spiritual experience will be like that of the Servant, Christ Jesus - perfect trust, obedience and dependence upon our God.

The Suffering, Sin-Bearing Servant: Isaiah 52:13-15

Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage (appearance) was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.

Who Has Believed our Report? Isaiah 53:

Verse 1 - ‘Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’

John 12:37, 38 – the Jews did not believe, the people did not believe; do we believe the report? It is foolishness to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 1:18), but it is power (the arm of the Lord) to the believer. The arm of the Lord is power, strength and salvation (Psalm 98:1, Exodus 15:11, Deut 5:15). It is Christ the gospel, the power of God unto salvation.

Verse 2 - For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

He has no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him; nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him (NIV). He has none of the earthly trappings that attract men – power, wealth, influence, beauty.

He has set aside the prerogatives of the Godhead – omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience – and made Himself of no reputation ((Philippians 2:7) and was set at nought and treated with contempt (Mark 9:12).

Verse 3 - He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...

He has tasted all our sorrows, griefs, infirmities and temptations – Hebrews 4:15.

And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Our response to Christ, the Son of God who gave up heaven for us:

We despised, rejected and did not recognise Him (John 1:10).

We hid from His face; the face in which the light of the glory of God is seen (2 Corinthians 4:6). For the Light shines, but the darkness does not understand it (John 1:5).

And when He came...we thought Him stricken (cursed) of God... (verse 4)

Because He was hung from a tree (Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29, 1 Peter 2:24), and those who were hung from a tree were deemed cursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Indeed He was cursed of God, but not for Himself. He was made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10-14).

And thus He became our great Substitute...

Verse 4: He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Verse 5: He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities...

...the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

He bore the punishment that brought us peace (Ephesians 2:12-16, Romans 5:10). While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

Verse 6: And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Like sheep that go astray, we are full of iniquity, always crooked and bent, always choosing our own way. Christ has borne the iniquity of us all.

Verse 7: He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He opened not His mouth, because He was providing *Himself* a Lamb (Genesis 22:8).

Verse 8: He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

Messiah will be 'cut off', *but not for Himself* (Daniel 9:26), but for the transgression of His people. 'Yet who of His generation considered that He was cut for the transgression of my people to whom the blow was due?' (NIV margin).

God the Father at Calvary:

Verse 10: Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

It was the Father's will to make His Son's life an offering for the sin of the world (Galatians 3:13, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:21).

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Saviour of the world. 1 John 4:14

The Father had to bruise (crush) His Son. The Father had to put His Son to grief. The Father had to take His beloved Son's life and make His soul an offering for sin, by putting Him to death, the second death, the death that is the wages of sin.

When Christ cried, 'Why hast Thou forsaken Me?', He was experiencing the curse of God; the removal of God's presence which results in death.

God so loved the world... that He gave His beloved Son to be the atoning sacrifice for sin.

And then, with prophetic vision, Isaiah looks beyond the Cross and sees the risen Christ. He records the triumph of His victory over sin and death and its meaning to humankind.

The Triumph of the Servant

Verse 11: He shall see the labour of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.

God will be satisfied with the sacrifice of His Son and raise Him to life (Acts 2:32).

Many will be justified (declared righteous) – Romans 5:18, 19.

The Blessings to Mankind of the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ:

Verse 10: ...He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

His Seed (His offspring)...we are His offspring

John 12:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Romans 8:29 After Calvary, Christ is the firstborn of many brethren.

Colossians 1:19, Revelation 1:5 Christ is now the Firstborn from the dead.

1 John 3:1 We are now the sons of God.

Psalms 22:27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn unto the LORD.

Revelation 5:9, 7:9 The redeemed (His seed) will be from every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

Romans 5:18 The free gift came upon all men.

He shall prolong His days...

Romans 6:9 Death has no dominion

Revelation 1:18 He is alive forevermore!

John 14:19 Because He lives, we shall live also.

1 Corinthians 15:53, 54 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality...

Revelation 22:5 They (the redeemed) shall reign forever and ever.

He will cause God's pleasure (His will, His desire) to prosper...

God's desire is that all the ends of the earth should be saved (Isaiah 45:22, John 6:39, 40, 2 Peter 3:9); that we should be adopted as sons of God (Ephesians 1:5), our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 7:25, 10:10, 14). All this is achieved through Christ's death.

Isaiah 52:15 He will sprinkle many nations...

His blood for the cleansing of sin (Ezekiel 36:25, Hebrews 9:13, 14, 1 John 1:7).

His blood for the cleansing from guilt (Hebrews 10:22).

The pouring out of His Spirit (Acts 2:33).

..Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.

Christ is the Saviour of the World. The Gentiles will hear the gospel message. They are also partakers of the blessings of salvation (Romans 15:15-21, Romans 9:25, 26, Ephesians 3:5, 6).

"My eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." Luke 2:30-32

But the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Isaiah 60:2, 3

Isaiah 53:12 Because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors... therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong...

By His sacrifice, Christ has vanquished Satan (Luke 10:18) and regained earth (Luke 11:22, John 12:31).

He will give gifts to men (Psalm 68:18); He is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15, 16).

You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the LORD God might dwell there. Psalm 68:18

He brings Health, Happiness and Holiness.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction. Psalm 103:2-4

'Every loaf of bread and every spring of water is stamped with the cross of Calvary'. EG White

He gives us His Spirit, who constantly reminds us of the victory of Calvary and makes real in our lives that victory - freedom from sin and eternal death, new life and righteousness, power to resist Satan and power to proclaim Christ.

Because Christ, who was:

God...chose to become Man.

The First...chose to become the Last.

Life itself...chose to suffer Death.

The Majesty of heaven...chose humiliation.

God has highly exalted Him (Isaiah 52:13, 53:12) and...

Given Him a name above all names (Philippians 2:9).

Put all things under His feet (Ephesians 1:20-22)

Extolled Him...*"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing!" Revelation 5:12*

Herein is the gospel, that God became the Son of Man that we might become the sons of God. He took upon Himself what we deserve for the joy of giving us what He alone deserves.

What shall our response be to all that God has done? Shall we believe the report...?

Centuries after Isaiah, Paul declares: *"God is for us...no one can be against us! God has declared us righteous...no-one can accuse us! God is our High Priest...no one can condemn us!" Romans 8:31-34*

'The greatest enemy we have to face is self..' Our unbelief keeps us from claiming the gift of salvation full and free in Christ Jesus. There are many roads to unbelief, but the commonest are fear and pride. God is waiting for a people who trust wholly in His perfect redemption. In that day, our praise and worship will be from our whole heart, for God alone will get all the glory.

May our prayer be: *'Lord I believe, help Thou my unbelief'. Amen.*

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 John 4:14
