

Famous Chapters in the Bible, Part 1: Isaiah 53, Page 1 of 2

Notes from the class taught by Pastor Doug Livingston, March 14, 2012

Isaiah began his ministry around 740 B.C. & ended it around 680 B.C. His name means “Jehovah is salvation” or “Salvation of Jehovah.”

WM: “The word salvation occurs 26 (28) times in this prophecy & only 7 (9) times in all the other prophets put together. This theme also illustrates the unity of the book: Chapters 1-39 depict man’s tremendous need for salvation & chapters 40-66 give God’s gracious provision of it.”

CR: “More about the person and work of Christ is found here than in any other book in the OT.” JVM: “Those who are acquainted with God’s Word realize that Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 give us a more vivid account of the crucifixion of Christ than is found elsewhere in the Bible.”

Isaiah was writing at a time when the 2 southern tribes (Judah) seemed to be following the apostasy of the 10 northern tribes (Israel) which resulted in the Assyrians attacking Israel & taking many of the Jews captive to Babylon. Isaiah warns the people of Judah that, unless she repents & turns back to the Lord, she will be judged in a similar way.

1. He begins with a question: “Who has believed our message?” We should ask, “What message?” Answer: “The message of God’s salvation.” Paul quotes this in reference to unbelieving Israel in Romans 10:16.

Isaiah then asks a second question: “And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” The term ‘the arm of the Lord’ is used in the Bible both for salvation & judgment (Exodus 6:6; Isaiah 30:30; 40:10; 48:14; 51:5, 9). See Isaiah 52:10. Jesus’ miracles confirmed He was the Messiah, but the Jews would still not believe in Him (John 12:37-38).

2. Back in 41:4, 9, Isaiah first identified “the servant of the Lord” as Israel. In Chapter 42:1-4, he speaks of him as an individual who would bring justice on earth. This & the Scriptures to follow would clearly identify him as the Messiah of Israel.

This Messiah would have humble beginnings at a time when His people would be living in unbelief. We know, from the Gospels, Jesus was born in a manger to a poor carpenter & his wife (Luke 2:7, 24; Leviticus 12:8). We also know, from John 1:12, “He (Jesus) came to His own, & those who were His own did not receive Him.”

Here, we also learn that the Messiah would not be an attractive figure who would draw people to Himself with His looks.

3. He would not only be despised & forsaken by His own people, the Jews, but also by the Gentiles. He would be “a man of sorrows & acquainted with grief.” Jesus wept over Jerusalem & at the death of His friend, Lazarus (Luke 19:41; John 11:35). He would be despised by most & esteemed by few.

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4. "Grief" here can also mean sickness or disease. This was fulfilled in Mathew 8:16, 17. Isaiah then prophesies this Servant would be "smitten of God & afflicted." That is was God's will for Jesus to die for our sins is also conveyed in verses 6 & 10.

5. This Servant would be wounded (KJV), crushed & scourged for our sins He would also be "chastened for our well-being" (NASB) or "our peace" (KJV).

KJV: "With His stripes we are healed." This speaks of spiritual healing, not physical. Peter references this in I Peter 2:24. Christ dying for our sins is also mentioned in Romans 4:25; I Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 9:28.

6. Gary Richmond, in his book, "All God's Creatures," lists 10 negative traits about sheep:

Sheep, of all domestic animals, require the most care & supervision.

They are compelled by mob instinct.

They are susceptible to fear.

They are timid.

They are animals of low intelligence.

They are destructive.

They are very stubborn.

They have a tendency to wander off.

They are vulnerable to predators.

They have an incredible ability to get dirty.

7. He would remain silent in his suffering (Matthew 26:63; 27:12-14). The Ethiopian eunuch was reading this passage when Philip approached him (Acts 8:32, 33). John said of Jesus: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

8. He would not have a fair trial (Matthew 26:57-66) & be cut down (killed) in the prime of His life (Luke 3:23).

9b. He was to be buried as a criminal, but instead would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Matthew 27:57-60). 9d. Peter quoted this verse in I Peter 2:22.

10. He would be "a guilt offering," an offering for sin (Leviticus 6-7). His offspring would be those who would believe in Him as their Savior (John 1:12, 13). In order to prolong His days, He would need to be resurrected which He was (Matthew 28:5, 6).

11. Through knowledge of Him, many, not all, will be saved. See Romans 5:18, 19.

12. See Philippians 2:9-11. Paul: "He (God) made Him (Jesus Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21). "Numbered with the transgressors" was fulfilled in Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37.