

## Isaiah Chapters 52b-53 – John Karmelich

1. We're now at what many Christian bible scholars call, "The Holy of Holies" of the Old Testament or even "The Gospel according to Isaiah". For what it's worth we're only going to cover 15 verses in this lesson. These fifteen verses are quoted in all four gospels, Acts, Romans and 1st Peter. My point is whatever's taught in these verses, the New Testament writers thought enough of them to quote them often. One of my favorite bible scholars preached over a half-dozen sermons just on these verses (John MacArthur). Much has been written on this text, which includes a book that's 900 pages. My point is a lot of people consider these 15 verses important that summarizing them a single lesson would be tough to "whittle down", so here I go of course.
  - a) When I'm faced with an overwhelming assignment to do, that's when I remind myself of the purpose of this ministry. I'm not here for the novice. While I do explain the Gospel a lot in my lessons, I always assume my readers are Christians who already believe Jesus is God and want to grow closer in that relationship. I also figure I'm being helpful for those moments all of us have when we go through our doubts.
  - b) Let me explain that last idea with a simple example. Someone close to me who's a lifelong Christian was going through a time of doubt many years ago. I asked the simple question of do you believe the Old Testament was completed prior to the New Testament writings? That person said yes. I then asked him to read Isaiah Chapter 53 and then ask if he thinks Jesus as God? After doing that, this person started shaking their head and thanked me for showing him that passage. My point is if one is having doubts about Jesus is God and one believes that the Old Testament was completed prior to the New being done, this text will revive one's confidence in the Gospel message just by studying these fifteen verses.
  - c) OK if they are so important, why is it buried near the end of Isaiah? That's because Isaiah has been discussing dealing with doubts about God for the last few chapters. Therefore it is a good spot to insert the Gospel account here. There is an old Christian saying that one needs to understand one is a sinner before one can explain the need for savior. That's why this isn't at the beginning of the book. As to why this section isn't on "Page 1" of the bible it's because God needed to lay out for us our failures to be good enough for Him using the nation of Israel as an example. Bottom line, "it's here where it is for a good reason".
2. At this point, let me address why religious Jewish people to this day won't accept this argument. Their answers have varied from an Isaiah's talking about the nation of Israel and not the Messiah answer, to God's explaining how the nation of Israel was "beaten up" for Israel's sake, which does not make a lot of sense when you read it. From what I've studied, Jewish writings prior to when Jesus came on the scene did see this passage as Messianic, but it was more of an "I feel your pain" response than the idea of the Messiah Himself paying for our sins. I could give you more history on this section, but what it really comes down to, as religious Jewish people believe one needs to prove their worth to God by how they live as opposed to just being grateful for what He did for us (i.e., die for our sins) and then living how He desires based on our gratitude for that act.
  - a) Since that time, some Jewish sects have tried to deny this section was part of the original text. Others say it's just about Israel dying for the sins of Israel, which again doesn't make a lot of sense. When the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered, among those scrolls was found a complete copy of Isaiah along with this passage. My point is "it always was there".
3. All of that leads me back to us Christians. Even if we believe Jesus is God and we've studied the four Gospels pretty well, why should we study this "Old Testament Gospel"? It's not like we will learn much new about Jesus from this text. On one hand, you're right. If you're pretty aware of all your Gospel detail facts, what one will get out of this lesson is that those details of how Jesus was beaten, killed and rose from the dead were predicted in detail, many hundreds of years before it even occurred. Those details are in this lesson and that alone is worth reading this lesson. If you would like to remind yourself of some of these details, that's a good reason to study this as well.

4. With that said, let me give you an additional motivation to read this text if you already are a long time Christian. Yes it's good for going through times of doubts. Yes gives excellent proof of what Jesus did for us was predicted in detail hundreds of years before it occurred. To explain recall my last two lesson titles: Two lessons back I said that lesson was to help us during those times where God goes silent on us. The last lesson focused on "where's God when I need Him" as to remind us He's still there. This lesson finishes a trilogy where God's effectively saying to us despite the fact we may not sense Him working in our lives at any moment, He's already paid the complete price for our sins, so anything we get over and above that is a "bonus". Remember that the purpose for living life is not to say get rich, famous or powerful, but to have our lives be a witness for Him in all that we do. God promises to use our lives for His glory if we make that commitment. We are not promised a "comfortable life" here and now with that commitment. Instead we will get a life worth living as we use it for the greatest purpose one can, which is to glorify the God who made us by our lives.
  - a) That means the purpose of realizing God Himself died for all our sins, means we're free to go use our lives for His glory. Therefore, it's necessary to have text "hidden" in the middle of Isaiah to explain why God will pay (Isaiah's perspective) and has paid (our perspective) the complete price for our sins, so we don't have to worry about trying to please Him and we're now free to use our lives to glorify Him. It's not about earning His love, but only to give Him glory for what He's already done for us.
  - b) So what's my lesson title? The more I considered it, the more I realized I just need to call it "The Gospel According to Isaiah". Yes I know it's not original, but as I went through this chapter, I realized that's exactly what this chapter is talking about.
  - c) With that said, I ask that you join me on a wonderful journey through 15 verses written a good 2,700 years ago that changed the course of human history as it literally was fulfilled about 700 years after it was written. I also ask that you don't take my word for it, but you read it yourself to see if what I write is true. Thanks for reading and let's get started.
5. Chapter 52, Verse 13: See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.
  - a) If there is one fact I love to emphasize in bible studies, it is that no one should ever read a bible verse out of context of the surrounding verses. Therefore let's examine the last few verses to remind ourselves why Isaiah wrote this verse. The previous few verses told the Israelites to come out from "there", "touch no unclean things" and God will guide them in the way they should go. Yes it can refer to the Babylonian captivity, but I think the bigger idea is about separating oneself from how the world around us lives, so we'll use our lives as witness for God. In other words it's a call to use our lives as a witness for God.
  - b) Therefore, the logical question to ponder is, "If God calls us to live for Him, why should I bother in the first place?" That leads us into the logical discussion of why God has to pay Himself for our sins? In other words it leads us to the "Gospel according to Isaiah" which is Isaiah literally giving us the complete gospel message in just 15 verses.
  - c) With that said, the first phrase of this text says, "My servant will act wisely". I doubt any of us doubt the idea that Jesus acted wisely. Even religious Jewish scholars acknowledge Jesus acted wisely. My question is why the word servant?
    - i) In other words if Jesus is God, how is He a servant? Think of it this way, if you or I were in a courtroom arguing a case in front of a bunch of judges, all of them may be equals, but one has to be the "head guy". Do I consider Jesus to be God? Yes of course I do. However, I also see Jesus as agreeing to do God the Father's will all of the time, which is the idea of being a servant to His will.
    - ii) Let me put it this way, even if it's our desire to be God's servant, all of us mess up pretty regularly. By Jesus coming as a human, He shows us not only how to act as a servant of God, but by being perfect and not giving into temptation, he did for us what we can't do for ourselves, be the type of servant God desires we be.

- d) My simple point is that even though Jesus is God, He came to earth to be a servant of God the Father to give us an example of how it is we should live. Stop and consider why Jesus needed to live a long time before dying for our sins. As the old joke goes why didn't Jesus just jump off a cliff and be done with it? Why suffer so much and why do all the miracles? Part of the answer is to give us proofs that He was God. The other answer is He taught by example how it is we're to live. The issue isn't how we dress or where we live. The key is to live with the attitude of being a servant of God the Father and a desire to do His will as we go through our lives. My point is Jesus lived to be a servant of God the Father and we are called to live as servants as well. That too, is the point of that first phrase.
- e) That leads us to the second phrase of Verse 13: "He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." When I think of something being "raised and lifted up", I think of them being in a place where many can see them. Yes of course it can literally refer to "the" cross as many could see Him in that state, however, I don't think it's the main intent of that verse.
- i) Let me explain this from a worldview perspective: Of all the places that humans live in this world, the nation of Israel is an insignificant place without any natural resources. It's only special because the bible makes it special. From that place, we read of an insignificant "nobody" who was born to an insignificant family, yet He's considered to be God because He rose from the dead.
  - ii) My point is this "nobody" became famous all over the Roman Empire within a 100-year time span as thousands and the millions became convinced Jesus is God. I'd say that's a pretty good example of a servant (think a "nobody") being raised high and lifted up and highly exalted.
  - iii) Let me try this one more way: I can't think of another example in history of anyone coming from a "nothing" background to be worshipped by multitudes as being the God who created all things. All I'm saying is this verse all by itself is a good model of what Jesus did and we're only on the first of the fifteen verses describing what it is Jesus will do (Isaiah's perspective) or has done (from our perspective) to change the course of human history.
  - iv) If you still have doubts this ties, to Jesus, remember we're just getting warmed up.
6. Verse 14: Just as there were many who were appalled at him-- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--
- a) Verse 14 reads like a contradiction to Verse 13, unless one knows the story of Jesus. In the last verse it said this servant will be "high and lifted up". In Verse 14, the first thing it says is many were appalled at him. Other translations say, "astonished". Over and above what Jesus had to physically endure (we'll get to that in a moment), stop to consider how much the world is divided over Jesus. Muslims consider Jesus to be a great prophet but not the God who created the world. Jewish people consider Jesus a misguided man who claimed to be God. Many cults think of Jesus as "a" God but not "the" God. All I'm saying is notice how the world is so divided over Jesus. No other figure in world history caused as much division as Jesus did and still does.
  - b) The other way we could read this verse is to be literal. Unfortunately, many have become "tainted" by a famous portrait of Jesus that was made many centuries later. We don't see anywhere in the New Testament any physical description of Jesus other than after He rose from the dead His nail prints were still there. If you study the stories of Jesus after He did rise from the dead, what we notice is nobody ever recognized Him. I'm now sure He was beaten so badly, nobody recognized Him. One of the many questions I ponder is does He still look like that today? In other words, when we see Jesus in heaven, will He look like a "beaten man" or look better than that? I have no idea. The visual images we always get of Jesus after His resurrection always looks good in movies and stories. What I'd like each of us to consider is the probably that Jesus looked so beaten, that even those who spent years with Him didn't recognize Him. That's the point made in this verse.

- c) Let's pause for a moment to consider any possible alternative meanings for these last two verses. First it says whoever this person is, He'll be "high and lifted up" and immediately later it says he was beaten beyond recognition. Jewish scholars will argue it's describing how the Jewish nation suffered and it was beaten beyond recognition. Even if one argues it refers to the fact that Israel was known in the Middle East as "God's people" before they were taken into captivity, it doesn't exactly fit the text well. How can Israel as a nation go through suffering on it's own behalf? How can the nation of Israel be "beaten up" beyond recognition just for itself? I simply can't buy that argument.
  - d) Let me come back to my why didn't Jesus just jump off a cliff and do it the easy way case: Why go through all of that suffering prior to His death? Why disfigure Himself beyond an ability to be recognized? An answer is that His blood had to be shed so our sins would be forgiven. But if He "jumped off a cliff", wouldn't that do the trick too? This way, it shows that it really was Jesus who died as there were multiple witnesses to how He suffered. It's also more proof of His innocence in the way He was suffered for what He didn't do. Also we need to remember that when we're in pain, we now have a Savior who can relate well to being in pain as Jesus not only suffered on our behalf, but retained those scars after He was resurrected to the point where no one who knew Him recognized Him.
  - e) Believe it or not, all of that leads me perfectly to the next verse:
7. Verse 15: so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.
- a) To understand the first phrase, we need to go way back to Exodus, and the ritual used for the process of symbolically cleansing the Israelites of their sins. One of the things we fail to think about is what a "bloody mess" God's temple was. What I mean by that is animals were constantly sacrificed for the forgiveness of sins. Innocent animals were cut up there and placed on an alter to be burnt up. Then the blood from those animals were sprinkled on the priests and even once a year on the most holy object in that temple representing the presence of God. All I'm saying is blood was "sprinkled" back then to symbolizing God is forgiving us of our sins and a model of what God literally did for us.
  - b) The simpler version is to grasp that Jesus blood was literally "sprinkled" (spilled) on our behalf for the forgiveness of sins. That leads us back to Verse 15. The verse says this will "sprinkle" many nations. If nothing else, we have to admit that after 2,000 years many do consider the shedding of Jesus blood to be the forgiveness of their sins.
  - c) Before I move on, of all things I want to touch on the issue of baptism. As someone who's spent time in both a Presbyterian and a Baptist church, I'll just say I'm very aware of both the "dunking" and "sprinkling" views on baptism. No I'm not going to resolve that classic debate. I just want you to realize the reason some churches argue for sprinkling is they do look at how the blood was "sprinkled" on our behalf and use that fact as the basis for why we should be "sprinkled" and not "dunked". While I understand the merits and the bible arguments for both views, I don't think the method is nearly as important as baptism used as a sign of our commitment to serve Jesus with our lives. With that statement completed, I'll get off the baptism method "hot button" and get back to the text.
  - d) The next phrase says, "Kings will shut their mouths because of Him". The word kings can also refer to leaders. When one reads the gospels, when never reads of the leaders in that world keeping silent because of Jesus. It could be a referring to His Second Coming. That is one possibility. What I suspect this means in context is once word spread about Jesus in His resurrected state occurring, there was nothing people could do to deny it as there was no dead physical body ever found. The fact that Christianity spread so fast and so wide in a relatively short time span is also proof of "Kings shutting their mouths because of Him". By the 4th century when the Roman Empire officially embraced Christianity as its official and only religion all it's leaders honored Jesus as God. That spread of Christianity is also the topic of the last sentence of that verse:

- i) The last sentence reads, "For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand." In other words if you're in doubt about my interpretation of how kings were silent about Jesus, think about that next sentence.
  - ii) Grant it, for nonbelievers it can also refer to the fact that all people be either honor Jesus by free will or by force, which is what Paul stated in both Romans 14:11 and in Philippians 2:10. My point is over the last two millenniums there's been many a "king" who's never seen Jesus but understood and accepted that He is God.
  - iii) That list included Roman emperors and many kings and presidents since then. All I'm saying is that the verse implies many great leaders will honor Jesus as being in a position far greater than whatever they have achieved.
  - iv) Meanwhile, we're only about a fifth of the way through this text, and the stronger proof that this text is about Jesus is still coming up.
8. Chapter 15, Verse 1: Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
- a) Loose translation: Who believed God came in the form of man to die for our sins? While many of us take that for grant it, one has to realize from a worldwide perspective just how controversial that idea is. Let's face it most Jewish people reject it to this day. All religions other than Christianity deny that Jesus is God and He alone paid the price for our sins. It's therefore logical to ask, "Who's going to believe this anyway?" as this verse does.
  - b) I want to explain the phrase "Arm of the lord": It's not a literal phrase, just an expression to describe God's power. We're describing the idea of God has the power to forgive us of our sins, yet who believes He'll forgive us just by us asking Him to do so
    - i) Remember in my introduction how I said I had a friend many years ago who was going through a moment of doubt about Jesus being God? I'm positive that friend was saved before and after that event. The reading of this section simply gave him reassurance during a moment of doubt. I'm positive there won't be anyone in hell or heaven that shouldn't be there to begin with. If we believe Jesus is God and He paid the full price for our sins and believe He's in charge of our lives will be saved even in a moment of doubt. My whole point is that if we go through moments of doubt about Jesus we won't lose our salvation if this message has been revealed to us and we believe it. That's the point of this sentence.
  - c) Think about this verse in context of those living in Isaiah's time. Did Isaiah fully get what was being implied in this verse by Jesus First Coming? No idea. The text surrounding all of this was about trusting God during times of doubt and difficulty about His existence.
    - i) Isaiah's essentially asking who still trusts in God in spite of all we've gone through as a nation and as people who claim they trust in Him? While those Israelites back then didn't comprehend that multitudes will one day believe their God did give His life for their sins, they could grasp the idea of asking if one still believes God's in charge of our lives. Remember how I said some Jewish scholars see this section as an "I feel your pain" sermon? This verse is the basis of that argument. This one verse read out of context is like God saying I know what you're dealing with right now. That works for this verse, but when we get to verses upcoming that say how "someone" was beaten beyond recognition I can't see how that concept can fit with anything other than a detailed description of how Jesus suffered just before He did die for my sins and your sins.
    - ii) All I'm saying is any one verse read in this passage out of context can be argued as a case for something else. If you study this section in context of the text around it, it becomes very obvious all of this is about Jesus on the cross. That idea may be no big deal to us Christians who take this for grant it, but for a writer in 700BC who is living in a time before the concept of crucifixion didn't even exist yet, this is tough to explain and write about and try to describe for others to read.

9. Verse 2: He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
- a) One of the reasons scholars call this passage "The Gospel according to Isaiah" is because it not only describes Jesus on the cross, but also describes His time on earth from the view of God the Father. That's what we get here in the second verse.
  - b) Let me paraphrase the first sentence as that might help: Jesus came into this world with a "nothing" background. Jesus wasn't born into a prominent family of that day. He was not raised in a palace. He was born to an insignificant family in the most humble of situations in an animal barn of all things. Let's be honest, if it wasn't for the miracles surrounding all of the events surrounding Jesus birth and the fact those miracles were recorded in Gospels for us to study, we never would have been aware of that event. My point is Isaiah's using a metaphor for "nothing significant" when he describes the Messiah as being raised before God the Father as an " insignificant root of a branch popping out of the ground" that's just a word picture Isaiah and his audience could relate to, to describe something insignificant even though from God's perspective this is a key point of all of human history.
  - c) OK John, you're "preaching to the choir" again. For us veteran Christians, it's to realize all we know about Jesus was predicted somewhere in the Old Testament including the fact of Jesus being born to a bunch of "nobodies" in an insignificant town in human history.
  - d) That leads me to the second sentence. One of the things that's always fascinated me about the Gospel accounts is there is practically no physical description of Jesus. Nowhere in the text of the Gospels does it say how tall Jesus was, or the color of his hair, or even says that he smiled at anything. In fact the only physical description we get of Jesus is near the end of John's Gospel (20:25) as it describes Thomas' desire to see the nail prints in Jesus' arms.
    - i) Many centuries after Jesus rose from the dead a famous painting was completed of what Jesus may have looked like. As someone who was raised Catholic, I know it is very common for a lot of homes of Catholics to have this picture in their house. I'm not going to complain about anything that helps people draws people closer to Jesus, but just remind us that we have no idea if that famous picture is accurate. If anything I'd argue it is not accurate in anyway based on Verse 2 here in Isaiah 53. This verse said there is nothing desirable in this man's appearance that we should be drawn to him.
    - ii) I suspect Jesus was very "average" looking. There was nothing special about His appearance that drew people to Him. I'm sure Jesus only drew a crowd based on the miracles that He did and the words that He spoke. What convinced people He was God was those acts and nothing about His appearance added to that fact.
    - iii) For my Catholic readers, I'm sorry to disappoint you. For those of you who have a picture of Jesus in your head as you pray, I'm sorry to say, that picture is probably not accurate. However you want to picture Jesus as you pray to God I just ask that you consider that picture was not an accurate representation of what Jesus looked like at that time. Remember if God is God, He can look like anything possible. All I'm saying is "back then" He was nothing special to behold at as far as His physical looks.
    - iv) So do you want us to picture an "ugly" God to pray to? Of course not. I don't have any idea what Jesus will look like when we get to heaven. All I want to accomplish here is to get the picture out of our head that Jesus was something special to see at the time He actually walked the earth. Let's face it the Gospel stories used to teach children wouldn't work as well with an "ugly Jesus". It's not like we have got to be praying to an "ugly Jesus" to be accurate. All I want us to realize is that Jesus was nothing special to look at during the time He lived back then.
    - v) OK, now that I've ruined all the images we have of Jesus from our childhood, I've now done by dirty work (Yes I'm joking.) and we can return to the text.

10. Verse 3: He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
- a) We're starting to get into the "heart" of the passage. When Christians think of Jesus we do think of Him as being rejected by most Israelites, and familiar with suffering. We all know how He was despised by most of His fellow Jewish countrymen, so we can see how literal this verse is, again, written 700 years before Jesus was born.
  - b) Again, as I think about things the four Gospel accounts never mention, is the idea of Jesus smiling or being in a good mood. I'm not saying that never occurred, I'm just saying there is no recording of Jesus ever doing those things. He did say angels rejoice over any sinner that repents in Luke 15. Still, we never read of Jesus smiling or laughing at anything. All I'm saying is consider that somber thought as we read Isaiah, he said whomever Isaiah is describing here as a man "despised, rejected and full of sorrows".
    - i) My personal view is Jesus did laugh and did smile. I can't see children running up to Him unless He had a joyful disposition at times. All I'm saying is we never read of any such joy in Jesus in any of the Gospel accounts. The only time "laughter " is even mentioned in the Gospels is during the "Sermon on the Mount" sermon when Jesus said those who weep now (fell sorrow) due to how sin effects the world, will have laughter in an eternal life. My loose translation of Luke 6:21b.
  - c) You have to realize how difficult it is for Jewish people to think of their Messiah as a man who was despised, rejected and full of suffering. They wanted a Messiah to rule over the world so that people can live in peace everywhere. That's a much nicer Messiah to picture in our minds. One who suffers seems like a contradiction. That's why they make the case of this is describing "Israel suffering for Israel's sake" or God saying, "I feel your pain" as it is describing sorrow and suffering on our behalf. I realize for us Christians we accept this as fact, but trying to convince people 700 years before it occurred that the Messiah would be rejected and full of sorrows does seem like a contradiction to fact.
    - i) Let me try this one more way: When we tell people Jesus had to die for the sake of our sins, it seems like a hard sell. How can God die? How can an innocent God be held accountable for our sins or suffer on our behalf? What is logical to us can be a major stumbling block to those who refuse to accept it. That's why the Holy Spirit is needed to work in people for their hearts to be open to the truth.
    - ii) The point is we should never pray for God to give us just the right words to say in order for someone to accept the Gospel message. We should pray for the hearts of people to be open to the truth. That's something only God Himself can do. What God asks of us is be a good witness for Him, so when we do interact with a person who has a heart receptive to the Gospel (even though we don't know if a person is receptive or not), we can be the type of witness God wants us to be.
11. Verse 4: Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.
- a) Here we come to the heart of the Gospel message. That he took our "sickness" (the effect of sin on our lives) and carried the burden for us, of worrying we're not good enough for God. The great mistake nonbelievers make is they think their good deeds outweigh their bad one's so they think they're good enough for God. The problem with that argument is one never knows how good one has to be. As I've explained many times, the only way to be with a perfect God for eternity is to be perfect, which means perfectly forgiven. That's the heart of the Gospel message right there.
  - b) One of the great mysteries to Christians is to comprehend what it was like for Jesus to be separated from God the Father in order for Jesus to suffer on our behalf. How is it that a God can "separate Himself" to be God the Father and God the Son? How is it that God is able to suffer on our behalf? How is it that God can "feel our pain" for us? We can picture in our mind how this might occur, but in human terms it's impossible to comprehend.

- c) I'm not saying this is impossible because it's difficult to visualize. I'm just saying Jesus did die for our sins even though many have a tough time comprehending that fact.
  - d) When we Christians read Verse 4 here in Isaiah, we nod our heads as we realize this is an obvious reference to what Jesus did. All I'm saying is that it was through God's power we can even accept this fact, as it's not logical that God can become a man or innocently suffer for us and pay the complete price for our sins. I personally know people who simply can't accept that idea. I have people that I regularly pray that their hearts be open to the Gospel truth. I also realize that I may not be the one who leads them to realize that truth. All I'm saying is our job is to be a good witness for Jesus. For people to take that leap of faith, we may not be the person who personally leads them that way.
  - e) All of that leads me back to this verse. Let me describe Verse 4 another way: Whoever it's talking about, "He" was smitten by God. When we think of Jesus' suffering, we think of it as being done by the Romans or the Jewish leaders. We don't think of God Himself being the instrument of that judgment. The idea of God smiting Jesus is that God did allow it to occur. There's also the idea of being separated from God. In the book of Habakkuk, in the Old Testament, notice this phrase from 1:13: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing". Of course God sees and knows all things by definition, but the idea of that phrase is God has a zero sin-tolerance policy and we must pay for that sin in some shape or form.
    - i) My point is we can't sin and think, "That's ok, God knows I'm imperfect and it's ok if I sin this one time." If we start thinking, "Hey I know God will forgive me of this sin and I can always "1st John 1:5" it later and confess it as sin, so it's ok if I sin this one time!" That's when we have to remember that God has a zero tolerance of any sin whatsoever. I'm not saying He expects us to act perfectly. I'm saying He can't tolerate any sin. When I meet a Christian who is dealing with some sin issue, my favorite response is to say, "Jesus died for that sin now I ask you turn away from it as it makes you a bad witness for Jesus when you commit that sin."
    - ii) I'm not giving this speech in order to "preach to the choir" again. I'm giving this as to help us understand how God the Son had to be "separated" from God the Father during the time Jesus had to pay for our sins. Do I fully comprehend what it's like for God the Father and God the Son to be separated? Of course not. All I know is it was necessary as God has that "zero" sin tolerance policy. For Jesus to pay for all my sins and all your sins He had to be somehow separated from God the Father as to actually pay for our sins. That's how Jesus was afflicted, smitten by the Father and separated from Him so that the price could be paid.
    - iii) My main point here is for us to understand how all of that was predicted in detail hundreds of years before it occurred. If you get that, you get this verse.
    - iv) Meanwhile the next verse is no easier to explain. So here goes:
12. Verse 5: But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.
- a) If you have any doubts this passage is about Jesus and if you've got a basic knowledge of what Jesus did, this passage should convince you beyond a shade of doubt that Isaiah is talking about Jesus 700 years before the cross happened.
  - b) At this point I need to give a brief history of "crucifixion". The idea of impaling a person on a pole was first done by the Persians. If you know your history, they didn't come on the scene as an empire until about 200 years after Isaiah's time. When the Roman Empire came on the scene about 400 years later, they "perfected" the idea of crucifixion by making a cross shaped one, and letting someone suffer a slow painful death by suffocating as they hang on that cross. My key point here is simply that when Isaiah lived, the whole idea of crucifixion didn't even exist. OK and that's relevant to my life how? Thought you'd never ask. Let me explain:



- i) The first phrase of Verse 5 said that whoever "he" was, he was pierced for our sins (ok, "transgressions"). The idea of the Hebrew word "pierced" is to be killed in the most painful way one can imagine. Obviously we Christians see this as when Jesus had his wrists and feet pierced with nails. That act is a perfect way to express the concept of "pierced" as understood in the Hebrew language.
  - c) That leads to the second part of this verse. The question of why He was pierced? The text says it was for our transgressions. It's the idea of Jesus dying for our sins. Again realize it is being predicted 700 years before it actually took place. The text is saying whoever He is He was killed in a violent way for us. By now, we should be seeing the big picture: Just as the blood was splattered all over the place when the Temple stood in Jerusalem, so we see His blood being splattered for our sins. Jesus died in a public and violent way so we'll be able to realize how His blood was splattered for our sins. Of course we Christians accept this as fact, but it's amazing to realize how all of those details were predicted hundreds of years before it ever occurred or even hundreds of years before crucifixion was invented.
  - d) One thing to grasp is that God the Father and God the Son "planned all of this" before the world even began. It's to realize they knew we can never please Him based on our efforts, so this plan was devised for God to come in human form, to have His blood sacrificed for our sins. Of course that's the Gospel Message, which is why bible scholars do refer to this passage as, "The Gospel according to Isaiah". That's also why early in the Old Testament we got laid out a whole system of blood sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, as to lay out the groundwork (symbolically) of what Jesus did for us.
  - e) I'll also argue that's why God allowed His temple to be destroyed one generation after He showed that system for the forgiveness of sins is now outdated. What's strange to realize is that when Jesus returns there will be blood sacrifices again, but then it will be to remind us of what Jesus did, not as an offering for sins. There, you now have the history of blood sacrifices in one paragraph.
  - f) The final thing to talk about in this verse is the concept that we are healed by His wounds. I assume we all grasp the idea that we're made "whole" with God by accepting His death as payment for our sins. However, how are we "healed" by His wounds? That's why it is necessary to understand why God requires a blood sacrifice for sins. It's to show the idea that the innocent suffer when we sin. That's why innocent animals were sacrificed. That's why Jesus an innocent of sin, had to die for our sins. By His blood being shed for our sins, we can grasp the idea that His blood had to be shed on our behalf.
  - g) Let me explain this one more way: If we are sick with a disease or get into a car accident, the text is not saying we're made better by Jesus' wounds. The idea of "healed" is the idea that we no longer have to be good enough to please God by our efforts. We're free to give Him honor strictly out of gratitude for what He did for us and not to earn His love. That's how we're made better by His blood being shed. Hope that helps. Onto the next verse.
13. Verse 6: We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- a) One of the issues that many people struggle with is why does everybody have to be cleansed of our sins? How does a baby sin? First, I'd argue there is an age of accountability, which is why I argue that a truly fair God judges people fairly. Next it's to realize that all people are born with what scholars call "a sin disease". That just means none of us are perfect, as each of us "inherited" a desire to do our own will and not God's will at any moment of the day. I never claim to be perfect. Even after living the Christian life for 20 years now, I still have my own struggles with sin. The desire to sin never goes away in this lifetime. By us accepting His sin payment, we never have to worry about sin again to earn salvation. Yes I'm positive there are rewards in heaven for believers, but those will come based on living as God desires we live. That's why Christians choose to live under biblical principals, not to earn His love, but out of gratitude for what He did for us.

- b) Let me give an example here: Because I know I'm saved, because I realize that when His blood was shed for my sins and the sins of everyone who believes He is God and He did die for our sins, we're saved, period, end of issue, period. With that knowledge comes a desire not to prove our worth to Him, but to honor Him as God with our lives. It's never a matter of doing more than the next guy or gal. It's a matter of doing what we believe He is calling us to do. The classic example is if God called a woman to do her best to raise her children to honor God as God, her reward in heaven will be as great as someone who has lead millions to Jesus. It's never an issue of how many people we saved or what deeds we have done. The issue is our loyalty to what God's called us to do. Me, I write just because I can't stand not doing it and I'm pretty sure that's what God called me to do. What about other aspects of our lives? Of course He wants us to be a good witness for Him in all that we do. That's why we pray for His power to work within us so we can be the person He desires we be.
  - c) The reason I'm stating all this here is so we'll realize that despite the fact that Jesus blood was shed for all our sins, that's the beginning, not the end of our story. From there Jesus desires we use our life to make a difference for Him. That's what God wants us to do with the "information" as laid out for us here in the Gospel story.
    - i) What if someone accepts Jesus on their deathbed? While their rewards in heaven may or may not be that great, at least they avoid eternity away from His presence.
    - ii) What if someone truly accepts Jesus as God and believes He died for their sins, but never uses their lives to make a difference for Him after that? Again, one will lose rewards for making a difference for Him, but I'm convinced as long as we believe in that concept we can't lose our salvation. That's why all the facts about what He did for us is laid out centuries before even the concept of crucifixion was invented.
  - d) Finally, what about the person who is truly naïve about Jesus and dies that way? Again I believe in a God that judges all people fairly based on what they did know or could have known about Him. Living in a world where so much information is so available to us via computers, I'm convinced a sane adult living in most of the world today has no excuse.
  - e) OK, enough of that tough stuff, back to "easy" Isaiah.
14. Verse 7: He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.
- a) I admit once we start to really study the Gospel accounts, we become just as fascinated by what is not said as what is said. That's why I mentioned earlier about the fact there are no references to Jesus smiling or laughing. I'm not saying that Jesus was never joyful, I'm just saying you never read of any references to what Jesus looked like or if He smiled a lot. At the same time, all four Gospels give blow-by-blow detailed accounts of Jesus' trials before He was crucified and there are no references to Jesus ever saying something like, I'm truly innocent of these charges, or don't you realize you're putting God to death? Jesus was put to death (killed) like an innocent animal being sacrificed for our sins yet we don't see Him complaining about how wrongly He was treated.
  - b) The closest we can come to Jesus ever even saying anything about His prediction is when He told the Roman governor, (Pontius Pilate) that the men who brought Him to Pilate are guilty of the greater sin. (See John 19:11). Jesus point was not to say Pilate was innocent, just that the Jewish leaders were held to a higher standard, as they knew their bible well, and should have been aware of what they were doing. As I like to state, the bad news of knowing our bible is we're now accountable for what we know. That's Jesus point as He spoke to Pilate about accountability before God. The fact that Jesus used the phrase that's translated "greater sin" tells me that not all sins are equal in God's eyes. I'm sure a ticket for speeding isn't the same degree of punishment as murder. Yes, Verse 6 did say we are all guilty of sin and all deserve punishment. I'm convinced because of "greater sin" means many will suffer more in hell than others just as many will be rewarded in heaven more.

- c) Yes I know I'm getting into "deep theology" here, but I want you to realize that if we do get the concept of God as "innocent" having His blood shed on our behalf, what does that mean in terms of how we live our life based on that knowledge? To believe all of this is a proof of our salvation, but our lives do matter after that. Sin is still to be avoided not as to earn His love but as to avoid being a bad witness for Him. That's why I'm convinced there are degrees of rewards for service to Him as degrees of punishment based on how we did live out the time we have in this world. Now that I've stated the obvious, let's move on.
15. Verse 8: By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.
- a) I'd like to take this verse one sentence at a time as we continue to unveil how the Gospel is preached seven hundred years before it actually occurred.
- b) The first sentence said "By oppression and judgment". If you study the Gospels carefully, Jesus literally had six separate trials before His crucifixion. Two in front of Pilate, one was in front of King Herod who ruled over a separate district than Pilate, and three before the leading Jewish figures of that day. None of the trials were legal or fair based on standards back then for both Jewish and Roman trials. The Jewish leaders looked at Jesus as a threat to how God was to be honored in their eyes, which is to work hard in order to prove one's worth to God. For the Romans, they wanted to do the Jewish leaders a favor as they want to keep the peace in that land. Remember that the Romans only had two key rules to obey: No rioting and pay one's taxes to them. Beyond that they pretty much allowed freedom of religion in their empire. All I'm saying is both the Romans as well as the Jewish leadership judged and oppressed Jesus from preaching freely as they viewed Him as a threat to their ways of life. All of this is laid out in the Gospel accounts for us.
- c) That leads us to the second sentence: Who can speak of His descendants? To state what's obvious, there is no record of Jesus ever getting married or having children. We need to realize we are His descendants. Not in the literal sense of having children, but as Paul did say, the church is the bride of Christ. (See Ephesians 5:22-32.) The simple point here is we are Jesus descendants in that He died for those of us willing to accept His full payment for our sins. That's the point of the second sentence.
- d) The third sentence states He was "cut off from the land of the living". The idea behind the phrase "cut off" is to be killed in the prime of one's life. The final sentence tells how He is stricken for the sins of "His people". OK, who are His people? Yes it applies to everyone who believes Jesus died for their sins. I also think it applies to Israelites as they were and are still "His people". That's why I can't accept the religious Jewish view that this section means, "Israel died for Israel", as that doesn't fit the passage at all. For us Christians, it is obviously speaking of God dying for our sins and only those who choose to accept this as fact will get to spend eternity with Him. My point is even though most Jewish people do reject the idea of Jesus dying for their sins, that's exactly what He did do, despite the fact most Jewish people to this day choose to reject that fact.
16. Verse 9: He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.
- a) If you still have any doubts this passage ties to Jesus, Verse 9 should kill the last of those possible doubts. In Roman law, when a person was found guilty of the crimes against the Empire, the worst punishment was crucifixion as it was a slow and cruel way to die. Once one was dead, the bodies were thrown into a pit and no "proper burial" was allowed. All I'm saying is Jesus was crucified along with a couple of others, so He was supposed to be buried with the "wicked". However, as most of us know the Gospel accounts, a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for Jesus body and he was buried in a rich man's grave as implied in Verse 9. As the old joke goes, Joseph told Pilate, "No big deal it's only for the weekend". (I had to sneak that one in here somewhere.)

- b) One more thing to consider before we move on. Ever stop to think why there were three crosses prepared that day? Remember the story of Barabbas in the Gospels, who was set free instead of Jesus? I suspect that third cross was meant for him. That's the classic story of the "Gospel according to Barabbas" as the guilty was set free (of sin) as the innocent did suffer on his behalf. While that's sinking in, I'll get back to Verse 9.
  - c) The last part of the verse says that "He" did no violence nor ever say any bad thing. What about Jesus condemnation of the Pharisees? Wasn't that a bad thing? Jesus always holds religious teachers to a higher standard as they (OK, me too!) are called to teach others of what Jesus did for us. My point is to condemn religious leaders for false teaching is not a sign that Jesus did a "bad thing". If anything it's necessary to call out false teaching so we can know the right path to go on in life. All I'm saying here is that Jesus never did a thing that one can use as an argument that He sinned in any way, shape or form. He truly died as an innocent man. That's why His trials were the greatest injustice in human history!
17. Verse 10: Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.
- a) I remember getting into a discussion many years ago about who is responsible for Jesus' death. You can make a case for the Romans or the Jewish leadership, but in both cases it is wrong. Those groups are as guilty as anyone else who rejects Jesus as Lord over their lives. If you want someone to blame, look at Verse 10. It says it was God's will to crush Jesus. Going back to that discussion from many years ago, my friend asked, so did Jesus commit suicide? I responded it's more like a soldier falling on a grenade to save his army buddies. We're the "army buddies" that Jesus died for.
  - b) That leads to a more interesting point. The next part of the verse said it was God's will for Jesus to suffer. Most of us get the "death" part by now, but why cause Him to suffer? The scholars will argue as proof that Jesus wasn't "faking it". My view is Jesus' hardest part of suffering was the fact He had to be separated from God the Father to pay the price for our sins. Either way, the suffering was God ordained. Then the text says God made him to be a "guilt" offering. The short version is if one feels guilty about sinning, one presents to the priests an offering for that sin to relieve that guilt. To state the obvious, Jesus became our complete guilt offering so nothing has to be offered again for our sins.
  - c) All that leads to the tough part of this verse: "He will see his offspring". To state what we accept as fact, Jesus never had any children. In effect we are His "offspring" when we did accept His sin payment on our behalf.
  - d) This brings me back to my lesson title: "The Gospel according to Isaiah". We have pretty much beaten to death all the suffering and death parts, but what about the resurrection? Where's that in this passage?
    - i) Remember how I said "crushed" is a descriptive term for the most gruesome death one can imagine? Recall how I described a guilt offering as something "innocent" being offered on our behalf? Well, that's the death part. The resurrection is also in this verse as the Messiah will see His offspring and have a long, eternal life.
  - e) I should quickly add that Muslim's "twist" this scripture. They believe Jesus will return as to lead the Christians to their faith and Jesus will have a normal family in that day. I can't read the passage that way. We are His offspring. Those of us who trust in Him will share our eternity destiny with Him. That fits perfectly well with both the Jewish and Christian view of the Messiah who will come and literally rule over the world one day. The joy for us is we get to rule with Him at that time.
  - f) So what's my proof that the Christian view is right and the Muslim view is wrong? All we have to do is read the New Testament as it describes Jesus being resurrected and we read and know of multitudes who have turn to Him when they believe in Jesus as God. All I'm saying is the proof of the resurrection fits well into the bible as a whole.

18. Verse 11: After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.
- a) We've only got two more verses including this one, so hang in there!
  - b) If you have any doubts that this 15-verse lesson includes the resurrection, Verse 11 should put a strong damper in that doubt. Remember how Verse 10 just said it was God's will to crush him? Well, the "Him" here will "see the light of life" and be satisfied. We all know it is talking about the resurrection, so why make such a big deal about it here? First, it is for us to realize this was God's plan from "Day 1" to do this. Not only did Jesus return to live after being crushed (killed), He (Jesus) will be satisfied. OK, what does that mean?
    - i) For starters it's more than saying, "Hey I'm alive again, this really worked." It's not like the movie "Ground Hog's day" when Bill Murray committed suicide just to see if he would be alive the next day. (If you haven't seen that movie, it's about a man who lives the same day over and over again). The "satisfaction" of Jesus is the fact that the price of our sin is taken care of, and we no longer have to prove our worth to God. It's the satisfaction of knowing "It's now a done deal, and we don't have to prove ourselves to God". In Genesis when Abraham was told to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, God interrupted the act as if to say, "You don't have to do it as I'll be the one offering My son". In fact Abraham realized he was acting out prophecy, as he names the place "In the Mount of the Lord" it will be seen. If you didn't know it was the same mountain where Jesus was crucified where Abraham did that act.
    - ii) Meanwhile, back to Isaiah, the point is God told Isaiah that the Messiah's sacrifice will satisfy God's desire to punish us for us, by He Himself, bearing that cost. That is the Gospel message in one sentence.
  - c) This leads to the second part of the verse. The key phrase to me is "justify many". Most of us know the famous verse of John 3:16 about "God loving the world so much He gave His only son on our behalf." My question is did Jesus die for "everyone or many" as this verse implies here in Isaiah? The answer is Jesus died for everyone, but only those who choose to accept it are saved. Therefore, we're part of the "many".
    - i) I assume most of us know that but I wanted to make it obvious.
    - ii) The last part of the verse is also obvious to the Christian as it reads, "He will bear their iniquities." In context it cannot mean that "God puts up with them", but it is obviously describing God Himself paying the price for our sins. Enough said.
19. Verse 12: Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the in of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.
- a) First thing one has to admit about this verse is for someone who God says it was "His will to crush him and make him suffer" in Verse 10, God's really changed His tone in Verse 12. If we have any doubts these 15 verses describe God "crushing" Jesus and then having Him resurrected again, the last two verses should kill those doubts.
  - b) Since I assume all of us get the Jesus' resurrection message by now, I'll end by focusing on the 1st phrase of Verse 12. Why does Jesus get a "portion among the great" and "the spoils with the strong"? If Jesus is God, what does any of that mean? Part of the answer is for us to relate to why Jesus did this. We think of kings and rulers getting a big portion of riches in this lifetime. We think of conqueror's as getting the "lion's share" of stuff. It's a way of describing God rewarding Jesus for doing this that people would understand.
  - c) OK, let me try this one more way: Whom does Jesus share His resurrection with? Those of us who accept it, will get the reward of eternal life in His presence. All of this is a way of saying, God will bless Jesus for doing this and God will bless us greatly for accepting it as payment for our sins. If we get that, we get the blessing we'll receive just for accepting all of this as God's truth. That's why these 15 verses are the complete Gospel message told arguably better than the four Gospel accounts in the New Testament.

20. With that said, let's close in prayer: Heavenly Father, Even though you've explained in detail to us the message of the Gospel centuries before it occurred as well as detailed accounts of the event after it happened, the eternal blessing we get for trusting in that Gospel will never end. For those of you reading who've never accepted the Gospel message as the truth, there is no "trick" to being a part of God's elect, just believing the facts that are written in history long before it occurred. As to the rest of us, may we continue to use our lives as a witness for Him so we too will share in the eternal joy that God the Father and God the Son share with each other and with us as well. With gratitude for what Jesus did, may we continue to use our lives to make a difference for Him. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.