

# Where It Begins • Isaiah 53

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *The Symbol*

1. What is this? [Hold up a cross]
2. This is the universal symbol of Christianity
3. What do people think of when they see it?
  - a. some picture a church
  - b. or they think of a person they know who claims to be a Christian
  - c. people have all kinds of various images that rise in their minds when they see a cross and think about what it symbolizes
  - d. a Jew might think of persecution
  - e. a Muslim, the Crusades
  - f. while a Hindu might identify Christianity with the US and think of materialism
4. What do YOU think of when you see a cross?
5. My hope is that after we look at this chapter together today, you'll see the cross in a new light

### B. *Context*

1. As always, we need to set the context
2. Chapter 53 is part of a larger passage in which Isaiah is looking forward to the Mission of the Messiah – the long hoped for Savior; the one who would come to redeem the earth from the curse and man from bondage to sin & death
  - a. he describes the Messiah's methods
  - b. how He will work – what He will do
  - c. Isaiah shows how the Messiah will be perfectly obedient to God
3. Chapter 52 closes out with some startling words
4. While the Messiah will reign as a glorious and victorious king, one part of His life and career will be marked by the epitome of tragedy and suffering . . .

## II. TEXT

### A. *52:13-15*

**13 Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.**

1. There we see Him as the exalted One; higher than all the other kings of the earth!
2. But then the tables are turned . . .

**14 Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men;**

**15 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.**

3. Without sparring us any introduction; without any gentle words of warning, the prophet moves from presenting the Messiah as a glorious King, to a broken and brutalized being
  - a. from exalted Servant
  - b. to suffering Servant
4. Isaiah says that the Messiah's appearance would be so badly mangled, it would surpass what any other hand endured
5. But from this marring of His form, the blood would be shed that would sprinkle, and so provide the cleansing stream that would atone for the sins of the world
6. His breaking, the shedding of His blood would be such a monumental event, that it would cause all the royalty and dignitaries of the world to stop to ponder and wonder at it
7. Now in chapter 53, Isaiah goes on to describe this marring and sprinkling in more detail . . .

## **B. 53:1-2**

**53:1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?**

1. Isaiah begins with a sense of wonder that though this is the very Word of God he is proclaiming, it will not be received by the people
2. The picture of the cross he paints here could not have been more clear, yet they missed it completely!
3. Think of it, Isaiah prophesied this over 700 years before Jesus came – and it was a well known passage to the Jews of Jesus' day
4. But they missed seeing it's fulfillment in His crucifixion

**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.**

5. The Messiah would be born and experience the normal life of a child
6. In fact, his origins would be rather humble
7. As he grew into adulthood, his appearance wouldn't be the kind of thing that would turn heads.
8. So many of the classic pictures you see of Jesus are certainly wide of the truth;
  - a. dark, smooth skin
  - b. long flowing hair
  - c. perfectly manicured beard
  - d. piercing blue eyes
  - e. aquiline, yet manly features
9. No, Isaiah says that his body shape and facial features were not the kind to inspire desire
10. In other words, he looked like a normal, first century, Mediterranean Jew!
  - a. you could pass him on the street and never know it
  - b. he was not the kind of guy to grace the front of JQ – Jewish Quarterly

- c. in fact, the gospels tell us that there were times when He blended in so well with the crowds that those looking for Him couldn't find Him
- d. Judas had to identify him in the Garden to the temple police who came to arrest him because he *was* so plain and ordinary looking
- e. otherwise Judas could have described him as the one who was 4 inches taller than everyone else, who had a face that looked like it was carved out of marble, and piercing blue eyes.

### **C. Vs. 3**

**3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**

1. Friends, these words comprise some of the saddest in all history
2. God, the One who framed the heavens, who stretched out the universe and hung a trillion billion stars in the sky, humbled Himself and became a man
3. The one who spoke, and the creation leapt into existence, reduced down to the inarticulate cooing of an infant
4. Deity wraps itself in human flesh – and we would expect that mankind would part to make a royal avenue for His arrival
5. But He was born in a stable; His first crib a feeding trough
6. Then he grows to be a man, who instead of being given the place of highest honor, is despised and rejected
7. Instead of living the life of luxury in a palatial palace, he is a man familiar with sorrow and intimately in touch with grief
8. And instead of people lining up to worship Him as the God He is, they pass Him by, ignoring Him, hiding their faces from Him, because word has gone out from the religious leaders that anyone who befriends Him will be ostracized
9. He is God, but He gets treated like the homeless man outside the bagel shop who asks for a quarter
10. If you need proof that mankind is spiritually *insane* and completely blind, then look at the way we treated God when He came as a man!

### **D. Vs. 4-11**

**4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.**

**5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.**

**6 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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**9 And they made His grave with the wicked; But with the rich at His death, Because**

**He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.**

**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.**

**11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.**

1. If I could be so bold – let me summarize:
2. Jesus died FOR YOU!
3. He didn't die for Himself
  - a. of all the people who have ever died, Jesus was the one on whom death had no claim
  - b. he was without sin – and since death is the result of sin, Jesus didn't deserve to die
  - c. but die He did – Why?
  - d. as your substitute – He took your place on the cross!
4. It doesn't get any more clear than verse 6 . . .

**6 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.**

5. We have *all* sinned and come short of the standard God has set
6. But God doesn't lower the curve because the test scores are so low
7. The standard is a perfect standard – it's *we* who have failed, and the guilt is all our *own*
8. The sentence? Death, ruin, loss, hell!
9. But God loves us and desires that we would spend eternity with Him in heaven.
10. So in His love, He provides a way that *justice can be satisfied* while at the same time *forgiving* us
11. God takes *your* sin, lifts it off you, and places it on Christ
12. That's what the cross is all about – it is the place of *substitution*.
  - a. He hung there FOR YOU
  - b. He took YOUR place

**5 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.**

### ***E. The Stripes***

1. The mention of *stripes* here reminds us that the event of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was more than just the time He hung on the cross
2. His sufferings for our sin began *hours* before the cross itself
3. And few Christians living today grasp just how great was the ordeal Jesus endured FOR THEM!
4. His suffering really began in the Garden of Gethsemane.
  - a. Jesus knew the time had come for His death
  - b. so He led the disciples to one of their favorite places
  - c. there, under great distress, He knelt down in prayer
  - d. Luke, a physician, records that the drops of sweat that fell from Him were as great drops of blood.

- e. it's been demonstrated that under extreme stress, the tiny vessels in the sweat glands of the forehead can burst.
  - f. this then mixes with the sweat and makes the perspiration look like drops of blood
  - g. if prolonged, it can lead to shock.
5. After Jesus was arrested, He was taken to the house of the high priest where He was given a sham trial.
    - a. once He was condemned, the officials turned Him over to the temple police
    - b. they spat in his face
    - c. then they blindfolded Him and struck him with their fists
    - d. being blindfolded, of course, he wouldn't be able to steel Himself for the blows and they would do all the more damage.
  6. Early the next morning, the Jews take Him to the Roman governor to get permission to have Him executed.
  7. So Jesus got no sleep and hadn't eaten since the night before
  8. A couple hours later, Pilate finally condemns Jesus to be crucified and He is turned over from the temple police to the Roman soldiers
  9. In preparation for the cross, the Romans would scourge, or flog the condemned
    - a. he would be stripped bare and placed in front of a large wooden post
    - b. His hands would be tied up above his head so that his back was exposed
    - c. then one or more soldiers would take a whip made of several thongs of leather
    - d. along these thongs were tied lead balls and pieces of bone
    - e. then they would set to work on the victim's backside
    - f. the first blows would make deep bruises in the skin and muscles
    - g. then as they continued the leather would begin to cut into the outer layers of flesh
    - h. more lashes would tear into the muscles themselves
    - i. and if the victim had the constitution to endure it, they would continue lashing him until some of the internal organs were exposed
  10. The whole point of the scourging was to weaken the condemned man so that it would hurry his death on the cross
    - a. since Jesus was so lucid and clear-headed after this,
    - b. it's reasonable to assume that the soldiers had taken the scourging as far as they dared
    - c. many victims never survived the ordeal of the scourging
    - d. but Jesus *had* to because He had to go all the way to atone for you and me.
  11. Seeing Him still conscious and alert, the Romans decide to have a little post-scourging fun.
    - a. so they put a robe over his bleeding shoulders –
    - b. they put a stick in his hand, a make-believe scepter –
    - c. they plait a crown of thorns; with each thorn being 2-3" long and they press it down upon His head
    - d. then they took the stick out of his hand and begin to beat him over the head, driving the thorns deeper
  12. Tiring of their sport, the Romans ripped the robe off His back, exposing the wounds to fresh bleeding

13. By then, the blood loss was so extensive His system was close to shutting down
14. But Jesus knew He couldn't give in to the overwhelming desire to give up and yield to the shock and fatigue
15. He had to drain the cup of God's judgment dry to the last drop and He must be clear headed to do so
16. The Romans compelled Him to stoop down while they hoisted the 80 lb. beam that would form the cross piece of the cross onto His shoulders and tie his arms to it
17. But the weight was too much and His strength gone, so he stumbled, and the Romans compel one of the crowd to carry the burden the rest of the way to the site of execution
18. Just prior to His being fixed to the cross, they offer Him some wine mixed with myrrh
19. This was supposed to act as a numbing agent that would permit the soldiers to drive the nails without so much effort on the victim's part to get free
20. But Jesus refused the drugged wine – it would only impair His senses, and they must be keen because He must drink the dregs of another cup – the cup of suffering
21. So, He is thrown down on His back on to of the beam
  - a. a soldier presses into the flesh above the wrist, searching for the place between the two bones of the forearm
  - b. he drives a heavy, square, iron nail thru the wrist, into the wood.
  - c. then he repeats the procedure on the other side
  - d. then the beam is hoisted up onto the upright post that has been there for some time and seen many other victims
  - e. Jesus' feet are pressed down, one over the other and another nail driven thru their arches
22. Jesus is now crucified - and the *real* agony begins
  - a. as His weight pulls on the nails in the wrists, a fiery pain shoots along the median nerve, from the fingers, up the arms into the head
  - b. as He pushes up to relieve the pain in the arms, He puts his full weight on the nail thru the feet.
  - c. again there is intense pain as the nail begins to tear thru the metatarsal bones of the feet.
  - d. this is just the first series of torment a crucified man endures: the next is worse
  - e. as the arms fatigue, great cramps sweep thru the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless pain
  - f. then the muscles fail and Jesus is unable to push himself up.
  - g. as he hangs, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act.
  - h. Jesus can *inhale*, but He can't *exhale*.
  - i. He has to fight to get even one short breath
  - j. as the carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and blood stream, the cramps subside
23. This cycle goes on from 9 AM to 3 PM.

- a. 6 hours of incredible pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, suffocation, & choking.
  - b. as He pushes up and sinks down, His torn back rubs into the rough wood
  - c. then the end draws near
  - d. there is a deep crushing pain in the chest
  - e. the lining of the heart, called the *pericardium* begins to fill with serum and starts compressing the heart.
  - f. the water of the blood has begun to separate from the heavier blood components
  - g. soon the pressure is so intense the heart is pumping wildly just to push the thick blood thru the body.
24. Jesus knows the end is at hand
- a. He takes in one final breath and cries out with His last breath - "It is finished!"
  - b. and then He gives up His Spirit
  - c. he didn't die one fraction of a second before the appropriate moment
  - d. He completed what He had come to do.
  - e. to offer His life a ransom for many.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Why? Why Did Jesus Endure Such Pain?*

- 1. He could have avoided it
- 2. He could have cut it short
- 3. He could have turned intense pain upon His tormentors
- 5. But He didn't. And you know why?
- 6. Because Of Love!

**1 John 4:10 "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."**

**John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him might have everlasting life."**

- 7. When we consider the cross, we should see the love of God.
- 8. If I want my wife to know I love her in a special way, I will give her a card, or bring home flowers or take her out for a special evening
- 9. When God wanted to show us how much He loves us, He sent His Son
- 10. ALL THE WAY TO THE CROSS!

#### B. V. 12

**12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, 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.**

- 1. Jesus, who came the first time to die as a substitute for sinners, who poured out

His soul unto death and who was numbered along with those who fall short of God's standard –

2. Is coming again!
3. But this time, He will get the portion He deserves
4. Last time He got the portion you and I deserve – death!
5. Next time He will claim the portion He deserves – the earth and all that is in it

### ***C. One of the Many***

1. As we end, there is one short phrase I want to ask you to take a look at in v. 12

**12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, . . .**

2. Now, here it is -

#### **And He bore the sin of many.**

3. Are you one of the many?
4. You see, while Jesus paid the price sufficient to atone for YOUR sins, the payment only is effective for you if you repent of your sins and believe in Christ.
5. What more can God do to win you?
6. Do not delay this most important decision one more moment!