

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL PROPHETS AND KINGS GOD THE REVEALER *GOD REVEALS THE SUFFERING SERVANT*

Did you know that Isaiah wrote a BIOGRAPHY of Jesus 700 years before He was born? Isaiah's prophecies came directly from God. They were not some ramblings, Isaiah imagined in his finite brain. They were God-inspired! There are four Servant Songs of Isaiah that describe the Servant of the LORD. Peter identified Jesus as being that Servant in *Acts 3:13 (ESV)* ¹³ *The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus...*

The Jews of Israel in Isaiah's day would have believed that Isaiah's prophecy was a reference to them—they considered themselves to be the 'suffering servant.' They were longing for the peaceable kingdom as described in *Isaiah 11:6 (ESV)* ⁶ *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat...and a little child shall lead them.* However, the Jews just like many today were overlooking their own sin and the repentance they needed to become suitable inhabitants of God's coming kingdom. In light of the New Testament, Oswald Chambers says: "...if sin rules in me, God's life in me will be killed; if God rules in me, sin in me will be killed... We must mentally bring ourselves to terms with this fact of sin. It is the only explanation why Jesus Christ came to earth..." Let's consider the fourth of the Servant Songs of Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 52:13 *Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.*

This Suffering Servant could not have been the nation of Israel since as a whole they rarely acted wisely. Jesus is wise. Paul wrote of him in *Colossians 2:3 (ESV)* ³ *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* And we are wise when we put our trust in Him through our faith.

Jesus was not only lifted up from the dead – His body was glorified. He ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. This song of the Suffering Servant begins with a promise that the Servant will be exalted! In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul looked forward to a future day for the exaltation of Jesus. *Philippians 2:10-11 (ESV)* ¹⁰ *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹ *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Read Isaiah 52:14 *As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—*

When He was questioned before Annas, Jesus was struck by an officer. At His hearing before Caiaphas, He was spit on, slapped, and beaten on the head with fists. Pilate had him scourged and beaten. In fact, scourging was

so terrible that prisoners were known to die from that alone. The Gospel writers give us the facts but not the graphic details of the crucifixion. Yet, what Isaiah writes is so graphic it is as though he was a personal eyewitness standing at the foot of the cross. It was so clear in his mind that he spoke in the past tense, as if it had already happened. God revealed to Isaiah a detailed account that fits no one else.

Read Isaiah 52:15 *so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.*

So shall he sprinkle many nations could be translated, startle many nations. It is startling to realize that we are as guilty of Christ's death as the Pharisees, Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, and the Roman soldiers. It is likely though that the word sprinkle is a reference to the ceremonial blood cleansing that was part of the Old Testament sacrificial system. What can wash away our sins? The answer is, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

But the very nation from whom the Suffering Servant came did not believe when He arrived on earth. Paul references verse 15 in **Romans 15:21 (ESV)** ²¹ *but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."* The Gentiles who had not grown up hearing the prophecies did understand when His own people did not.

Read Isaiah 53:1 *Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

The phrase '*the arm of the LORD*' is symbolic of God's mighty power BUT, here we find that the arm of the LORD is a Person! This verse is connected to Jesus in **John 12:37-38 (ESV)** ³⁷ *Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,* ³⁸ *so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"* The Apostle Paul made the Isaiah connection as well when he wrote in **Romans 10:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"*

Read Isaiah 53:2 *For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.*

They were looking for someone powerful and strong and yet Isaiah says that the One who would come would be like a little plant coming up out of the desert. The nation of Israel was a wilderness of dry ground when Jesus was born. Isaiah foretold in another prophecy that the Servant of the LORD would come as a helpless child.

Isaiah 9:6 (ESV) ⁶ *For to us a child is born...*

Isaiah said: *he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.* This does not mean that Jesus was an ugly looking person. He could not have ugly because He had a beautiful Spirit. It just means that He was ordinary. He was not a charismatic character. Adrian Rogers said that we

would not be able to pick Jesus out of a crowd. Rogers makes the point that Judas had to **point** Jesus out to the soldiers. Jesus was not like Saul, the first king of Israel, who stood head and shoulders above the rest.

Read Isaiah 53:3 *He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

The Jews were looking for a dazzling Messiah. We see in the New Testament how they treated their King. **Matthew 27:30-31 (ESV)** ³⁰ *And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.* ³¹ *And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.* The old hymn says it well, “Man of Sorrows what a name for the Son of God, who came ruined sinners to reclaim: Hallelujah, what a Savior!”

Read Isaiah 53:4-5 (ESV) 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 pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

This passage is fulfilled in two ways as explained by Matthew and Peter. Matthew speaks of the physical healings that Jesus performed as a witness of His power during His earthly ministry. **Matthew 8:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ *This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”* Jesus identified with the consequences of Adam's sin when He ministered to needy people and He still answers prayers for healing. However, we should not consider the cross as a blanket promise of physical healing in every situation.

The cross is a promise of forgiveness of sin to those who repent and trust Christ alone. Peter explains in **1 Peter 2:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* Sin is the sickness that only Jesus can heal; therefore, Peter applied this passage to Jesus' atoning death.

Read Isaiah 53:6 *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.*

John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the Lamb who would bear our iniquities: **John 1:29 (ESV)** ²⁹ *... Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!* And, Jesus Himself said in **John 10:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

Isaiah 53:7-8 (ESV) ⁷ *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.* ⁸ *By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?*

Jesus was not guilty and yet He remained silent. **John 19:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *He [meaning Pilate] entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.*

In **Acts 8:26-39**, Philip the evangelist was sent to the Ethiopian eunuch who was traveling home in his chariot reading these words of Isaiah. The eunuch was unsure of whom Isaiah was speaking. Philip had the privilege of using **Isaiah 53** to point the man to Christ. This is just another New Testament affirmation that Isaiah wrote of Jesus 700 years before He came to earth as our Suffering Savior.

Read Isaiah 53:9 *And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

The scripture records that Jesus was crucified like a common criminal between two thieves. He was *assigned* to a cross. But then Isaiah through the telescope of time saw what happened as Jesus was buried. **Matthew 27:57-60 (ESV)** ⁵⁷ *When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph... took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock...*

Isaiah 53:10-12 (ESV) ¹⁰ *Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

We say that men crucified Jesus but Isaiah saw prior to the crucifixion that over it all was the hand of God. Peter explained in **Acts 2:23 (ESV)** ²³ *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* Jesus was not a martyr. His death was not an accident. He was God's intended sacrifice to take away the sins of the world.

Jesus was rewarded for His sacrifice – He did not remain dead! Isaiah saw that through the telescope of time: *He will prolong His days.* He was raised from the dead to live forever! **Ephesians 1:22 (ESV)** ²² *And he put all things under his feet...* And Jesus was given a second reward. To die childless was a grief and shame to the Jews, but because of the cross, Jesus who had no physical descendents became the head of an ongoing spiritual family.

We cannot make anyone believe Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant or the New Testament history of the life of Christ that confirms the reality of Isaiah's prophecy. Everyone must choose to believe or not. But, good news is for sharing and I will leave you with another word from **Isaiah 52:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."* Jesus is the Good News! Tell someone!