

Isaiah 53 The Suffering Servant – Part 5

Today, we are on part 5 of the Suffering Servant sermon series.

Now many of you may ask we have already covered one month of Isaiah 53,

why is our pastor so obsessed with this one chapter?

To be honest,

I thought I would only spend 2 or 3 weeks on Isaiah 53,

but as I prepared for my sermons and

studied the suffering servant,

I realized that this is among the most important passages of the Old Testament.

In fact, it has risen to become one of my favorite passages of the Old Testament.

I did some investigation on what the New Testament writers thought of Isaiah 53 and

I was surprised to find that Isaiah 53 is one of the most quoted – directly and indirectly – passages of the OT.

Matthew Mark Luke John Acts Romans 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians,

1st Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, 1st Peter and 1st John all make reference to Isaiah 53.

There is perhaps no OT passage so convincingly applied to Jesus in the New Testament as this one.

The sheer number of references made by the NT writers reveals that Jesus, after he resurrected from the dead,

must have taught from this passage,

during those 40 days to ascension,

to open the eyes of His disciples to the Gospel.

Another reason this passage is important is that it points to Jesus as the suffering servant so well that most Jews are troubled by it, and some even come to Christ through it.

There is a Jewish believer in Jesus who goes up to random Jews in Israel. And without the Jews knowing he's reading from the Jewish Bible,
he reads aloud Isaiah 53.
The Jews usually think he is reading from the NT.
He then asks the Jews,
who is this person I just read about?
Who is this person who suffered and died for the sins of his people?
They usually reply, "It's Jesus, of course."
And then the Jewish believer then exposes the source of the reading –
It's from your very own Jewish scriptures: the Tanakh – Isaiah 53.
Most of the time, the Jews are surprised, but never are they pleasantly surprised.

You see,
a simple hearing of the description of Christ on the cross in Isaiah 53 is instantly clear — even for a Jew.

I'm reminded of the story of a famous Jewish man who became a believer of Jesus.
His father who was an orthodox Jew that hated Christianity.
He was ashamed of his son becoming a believer in Jesus.
Despite the antagonism, the son on occasion tried to share the Gospel with his staunch Jewish father by reading from Isaiah 53.
As he was reading from Isaiah 53, the father said, "Hey, stop it! You're reading about Jesus.
You're reading from the NT, the Christian Bible.
We're Jewish, we don't read the NT!"

The son replied,
"I'm actually reading from the Jewish Bible, our Tanakh,
the very Bible that was given to me by the orthodox Jewish rabbi you hired for my Bar Mitzvah.
See, the rabbi even signed it."

The father became upset,
"I don't want to hear any more of this!"

“You don’t want to hear the Jewish Bible? Isaiah 53?”

A few years later,
when the old man was on his death bed,
his son’s reading of Isaiah 53 had proven to have made a huge
impression on the old man because,
before he died,
his son asked him,
“Would you like to know the Messiah, the Suffering Servant?”
And his father said in Hebrew, “Ken! Ken!” -- meaning “Yes! Yes!”

His Jewish father is fortunate because he came to saving faith in the
Messiah before he died.

Most Jews, however, fail to see Jesus as the fulfillment of Messianic
Prophecy.

Why is that?

The most theologically rooted explanation is offered by Paul:

(Rom. 11:25)

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters,
so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a
hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

In 2 Cor. 3:15, Paul says of the Jews

“a veil lies over their heart” when they read the Old Testament.

(Acts 13:27)

The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet
in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are
read every Sabbath.

But in addition to these passages, another reason is this basic law of
reality: You cannot see what you refuse to look at.

Let me explain,

Virtually all Jewish synagogues follow a yearly Bible reading schedule through much of the OT.

There are set readings for each Sabbath as well as special readings on holy days.

Every Sabbath includes a

Parshah

- a reading from the Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy)
- read entirely every year

The Parshah is followed by a

Haftarah

- reading from the Prophets
- means “completion.”
- read entirely every year
- Jesus reads the haftarah in Luke 4:17-18

Do you remember? Jesus stands up in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth and then reads from the Isaiah scroll.

If you look up the modern yearly synagogue reading schedule, however, you will discover that Isaiah 53 is never read. Ever.

Not in the weekly Sabbath readings.

Not on any special holy day.

Every year around September one of the scheduled Sabbath readings is Isaiah 51:12-52:12.

But do you notice where this reading stops?

It stops at Isaiah 52:12, right before the prophecy of Jesus starts – which starts at Isaiah 52:13.

What do you suppose the following Sabbath haftarah reading is? Isaiah 54:1-10. They completely skip Isaiah 53.

The seven-week Sabbath haftarah readings:

Isaiah 49, 50, 51, 52 (up to 52:12), 54, 55, and 56.

Where is Isaiah 53?

It appears that Isaiah 53 has been purposefully removed so that there is no regular, public, Jewish exposure to it.

Why is that?

It is said that the 17th century Jewish historian, Raphael Levi,

admitted that long ago the rabbis used to read Isaiah 53 in synagogues,

but the chapter caused “arguments and great confusion,” so the rabbis decided that the simplest thing would be to just take that prophecy out of the Haftarah readings in synagogues.

That’s why today when Jews read Isaiah 52, they stop in the middle of the chapter and the week after they jump straight to Isaiah 54.

Remember, you cannot see what you what you refuse to look at.

Interesting to note, however,

some Israeli scholars and academics are beginning to admit that the rabbis perhaps omitted Isaiah 53 intentionally.

In 2005 at the 14th World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem a call went out for critical discussion of this very issue.

Now let's go back to our passage in Isaiah 53:8

- Isaiah 53:8

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?

What does it mean that ...

The Servant Was Stricken

stricken

past participle of strike

נָגַח

(neh'-gah)

a stroke, plague, mark.

What are some ways Jesus was struck?

JAMA actually published some research work on **On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ:**

“Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to His side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between His right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured His death...”

If you notice in medieval crucifixion paintings the placement of the nails in the hands of Jesus are actually wrong.

We know today from scientific experiments and physiology that it is mechanically impossible for the pierced hands of the crucified to support the weight of a crucified body on a cross.

Experiments on crucified cadavers demonstrate that nails simply tear through the flesh of the palm of the hands.

If nails are passed through the wrist, however, the arms can support the weight of the body because of the carpal bones of the hand.

As the spikes were nailed into the wrist area of the hand, the median nerve would be crushed and it would send sharp, jolts of pain through the arm.

Isaiah 53:9

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

What does it mean that he “did no violence” or “there was no deceit in his mouth.”

1 PETER 2:22 gives us insight,

“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.”

He was without sin.

Jesus was holy. Why does Jesus have to be without sin? Because in order for Jesus to be the spotless lamb to take away the sins of the world, he had to be without sin.

1 Peter 1:18,19 says,

Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Remember, in Hebrews 9:22 it says, without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sins. The blood of Jesus is precious to us – it is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. And because of this great exchange, **Our Sin Falls Upon the Sinless Servant:**

In Isaiah 53:6 it states,

All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

You see, we are the sheep that goes astray – turns our own way – disobeys God. But the lamb of God – Jesus – is the obedient sheep – without sin. He is the innocent, sacrificial lamb!

2 Cor. 5:21 says,

For our sake He (God) made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Only if Jesus is sinless, can he take upon himself the penalty of our sin; only if he is righteous, can he transfer his righteousness to us. Praise God for the imputation of His righteousness so that in Christ we can be considered righteous – that is, justified.

Our justification came at a cost – Isaiah 53:9 states,

**He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death.**

As you know, this prophecy came true: Jesus died between two criminals.

In addition, he was buried in the tomb of a very rich man named **Joseph of Arimathea**, who buried the body of Jesus Christ in his garden tomb. Joseph was rich enough to afford such a tomb. He was also "a respected Jewish man member of the council, the Sanhedrin, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God"; and he "had not consented to their [the Sanhedrin's] decision and action. "

Today, if we look at Bible archaeology, we have 2 proposed sites of Jesus' death and resurrection.

One is the **Church of the Holy Sepulcher** – a church located in Jerusalem.

It is the most famous church in the world.

Thousands of pilgrims come to visit this church everyday.

Located in this church is what is believed by many to be the location of Calvary, Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus.

I've visited this church many times but I don't like this church because there is so much blatant **Idolatry: Veneration of Stone Objects and Images**.

This is the preferred location of Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic, the Coptic Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox churches.

These denominations share and jealously control the church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Unfortunately, as you can see in the picture,

these churches have ignored the 2nd commandment

"Do not make an image" and so objects of stone and images have been created. The entire site is not only teeming with images and objects, but these images and objects are also venerated.

Another reason I don't like the site are reasons related to scholarship and research.

Because the death and burial site of Jesus is covered by the church structure, shrines, icons, paintings, and other structures, it is very difficult to do any archeological research on the site.

Notice our church – the Protestant Reformation church -- is not included among the 6 churches that control this site.

The other proposed site of Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus is the **Garden tomb**.

This is known as the Protestant site of Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus.

If you notice in the pix, there are no images of Jesus or saints and no veneration of objects of stones.

People come here to see a possible location –
what it could have looked like 2000 years ago –
on this Protestant site of **Golgotha** and Jesus' Tomb.

So it is also a site that is educational –
it opens up the Scriptures to visitors.

Because it is not covered with church structures, pillars, shrines, icons, etc., I like this site because it is easy to verify that this location (archaeologically) fulfills all the criteria laid out in the Gospels:

Evidence for the Garden Tomb as Legitimate Site:

- Excavations prove it to be a garden owned by a rich man (a wine press that dates back to Jesus time and a cistern – 3rd largest -- were excavated there).
- It is clearly outside the old walls of Jerusalem.
Jesus suffered and **died** outside the city gates to make his people holy ... to sanctify the people by his own blood, **Jesus** also suffered **outside the camp**. Heb. 13:12
- There is a rocky cliff nearby with the face of a skull in it.
- It is near the city gate (the Damascus Gate).
- The cliff is thought to have been a place of execution.
- A stone gutter for a large stone to roll over the entrance is in front of it.
- The tomb is cut out of the rock.
- It has a low entrance that forces you to bend over. (Scripture mentions Mary Magdalene bent over to look into the tomb in John 20:11)
- Golgotha and the tomb are close to each other, as the Sabbath "hurry" required.
- There are evidences of ancient Christian symbols and activity on the site (crosses, etc.).

However, my biggest evidence that this site is the actual one is one that actually comes from **the Old Testament**.

Do you remember the story of **Abraham and Isaac**?

Do you remember God tested Abraham?

He told him to go to a mountain and sacrifice, his son, his only son, whom he loved. Abraham was obedient and he took his son up on the mountain to sacrifice him.

Isaac, thinking that Abraham was going to sacrifice a lamb, asks his father, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb."

Long story short,

Abraham is about to sacrifice his son,

but the Angel of the Lord stops him at the last second.

Gen. 22: 13,14 says,

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram[a] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord, the Lord will provide."

Let's read the last line together.

"On the mountain of the Lord, the Lord will provide."

יֵרָאֵה יְהוָה

[yeh rah eh}

So did God provide?

Yes, I believe he did on this actual spot, on this actual mountain range.

You see, the place the Lord will Provide a substitute for Isaac was located on which mountain?

Answer: Mount Mariah.

And do you know where the Protestant location of Golgotha is?

It's on the **highest peak of Mount Moriah**.

I believe about 2000 years after Abraham was promised **"the Lord will provide."** [Adonai yeh rah eh]

God kept his promise on the very same spot –

at the height of Mount Mariah – which is also the same spot of? What? You guessed it – Golgotha, the Protestant location of Golgotha

– it's located right here.

At this site – God provided a substitute – the Suffering Messiah, who would be punished for OUR sins,

He provided His Son,

His one and only son to suffer and die instead of us.

We deserved to suffer and die,

but God provided Jesus –

the true sacrificial lamb caught in the thicket --

He allowed us to humiliate him, reject him, and to torture him to death in order to take our sins upon himself on the tree on Golgotha on the place of the Skull.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

because of what the suffering servant has done for us,

let us also suffer for the good of others who sin against us.

If God, who is perfect, forgives us of all our sins,

how much more should, we who are not perfect,

forgive one another?

Beloved, this is the wonderful message of the Suffering Servant:

God who loves us has done for us what we could never do for ourselves!

Praise God for saving us from our sin through the Suffering Servant!

Let's Pray!