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Jesus, The Suffering Servant

(Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12)

By Larry D. Mathis

That Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12, applies to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, must be evident to every unprejudiced reader who has ever heard of his life and death. From this prophecy Philip preached unto the Ethiopian "Jesus" and then baptized him into Christ for the remission of his sins. (Acts 8:26-40; Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:38).

Have you ever wondered what Philip preached? Though our list is not exhaustive, we would like to suggest at least thirteen points from this prophecy. Surely, Philip touched on some of these, maybe all of them, and probably more than what we shall list. In our estimation this is one of the greatest and most significant texts in all of the Bible. In great detail it describes "The Suffering Servant."

(1) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD NOT BE ATTRACTIVE TO THE JEWISH NATION. Isaiah predicts, of Christ, an appearance that would be "marred" more than any man's; and that, he (Jesus) would have no form or comeliness, and no beauty that we (Jews) should desire him. What does Isaiah mean?

Surely, Isaiah does not mean that the Savior's physical appearance was so "marred" (from birth) that he was ugly, repulsive, deformed, or grotesque. There is no indication that Jesus had severe, disfiguring birth defects or that he was deformed in any way!

Isaiah's language should be understood in light of Jesus' suffering and death during the crucifixion. He bore grief, sorrows, and indescribable pain. Our Lord was chastised, bruised and wounded for sinful man. This is the "disfigurement" Isaiah predicts. Jesus would be horribly "disfigured" by the cruel treatment received at his trials and the crucifixion, and would, therefore, be repulsive to the Jews.

Another point begs to be emphasized.

Jesus was also unattractive to the Jewish Nation in another way; simply because he did not meet their silly expectations of what the Messiah should be. Our Lord was very humble in background appearing as an unimposing peasant carpenter from a small obscure village in Galilee. By the world's standards, he was unimpressive in appearance.

(2) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD BE DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN. By this Isaiah describes the reception Jesus would experience from the Jewish Nation. To "despise" is to ascribe little worth to someone, or to hold that person in contempt. The vast majority of the Jews did not appreciate Jesus' worth or have the proper esteem for him. John wrote, "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not." (John 1:11.) Jesus later said, concerning himself, "They hated me without a cause." (John 15:25).

(3) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD ENDURE SORROW AND GRIEF. Not only was he to be a man of sorrows and one who was acquainted with grief; this servant would also bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows. Nowhere is this more vividly reflected in his life than in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Mark 14:32-35; Luke 22:44.) Jesus, knowing that the cross was near, took with him Peter, James and John. The record says that he was sore troubled and said to them, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Then, he fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him. Try to imagine his condition; Luke states that Jesus was in such an agony his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

(4) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD SUFFER FOR MAN'S TRANSGRESSIONS. The vicarious death

of Christ for humanity is the heart of the Bible and this grand truth is reflected in numerous passages. For instance: "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly . . . while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6, 8.) He "died for our sins according to the scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3.) There was absolutely "no fault in him." (Luke 23:4.) He was "holy." (Luke 1:35.) Jesus could not be "convicted of sin." (John 8:46.) He "knew no sin." (2 Corinthians 5:21.) He "did no sin." (1 Peter 2:22.) He was "without sin." (Hebrews 4:15.) He alone was "without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:19.) No sacrifice was needed for him. (Hebrews 7:27.) This "Suffering Servant" came to save others "from their sins" (Matthew 1:21); "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17); and was "once offered to bear the sins of man." (Hebrews 9:28.) This being the case, he is able to "cleanse us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.)

(5) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD BE SILENT WHEN ON TRIAL. On trial, he made no attempt to retaliate or to escape, but was submissive. The "Lamb of God" offered no resistance toward his tormentors, but like a lamb that is about to be slaughtered or a sheep that is to be shorn, remains silent. Isaiah predicted that he would not open his mouth. Now, observe the fulfillment:

This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus appeared before Pilate, the chief priests and elders. "Now Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, HE ANSWERED NOTHING. Then saith Pilate unto him, Hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he gave him NO ANSWER, NOT EVEN TO ONE WORD: insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." (Matthew 27:11-14.)

And as Jesus appeared before Herod: "Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was of a long time desirous to see him, because he had heard concerning him; and he hoped to see

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EDITOR Jared Williams
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Opportunities From Conflicts

READ ROMANS 8:28-39

Bible Thought: "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:12,13).

Daily we are faced with conflicts and tensions. It is exactly these problems that we should use as opportunities to come closer to Christ. When Paul stated that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose, he must have included such troubles as you and I have every day. But how can we make these a means of good in our lives?

Consider some of life's conflicts -- angry words, strife, divisions, idle speech, and the disagreeable behavior of others -- as opportunities for growth in Christ. In order to come closer to Jesus we must realize that he acts in every aspect of our life. We must be convinced of his love and of our need to love him and to have our desires and will conform to his. We come to know Christ by applying Biblical principles to our everyday lives. This we can do through devotion in worship and by service to others. By practicing his will each day, we transform our lives from the disappointing and ugly to lives of beauty and service. Our conflicts and tensions are tests which can benefit us and show others Christ.

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JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT

(continued from page 1)

some miracle done by him. And he questioned him in many words; but HE ANSWERED HIM NOTHING." (Luke 23:8-9.)

(6) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD DIE UNDER A JUDICIAL SENTENCE. Our Lord was tried and convicted (illegally) under both Hebrew and Roman Jurisprudence. He not only did not have a fair trial, he was killed in defiance of justice. His trial stands as the most violent miscarriages of justice in all of the annals of history. The proceedings of this "kangaroo" court were illegal from start to finish. Jesus was tried and condemned in one day; his trial began after midnight and was concluded by early morning.

Is it not truly significant that Isaiah predicted Jesus' judgment and that he would die under a judicial sentence? Christ was executed! He did not die of old age, disease, starvation, etc.! "By oppression and judgment he was taken away . . . he was cut off out of the land of the living." (Isaiah 53:8.)

(7) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD DIE BY VIOLENCE. He would be "cut off out of the land of the living." "Cut off" denotes a violent death. Jesus, in the prime of life, was snatched away at the hands of his murderers.

(8) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD BE NUMBERED WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS AND THEY WOULD MAKE HIS GRAVE WITH THE WICKED IN HIS DEATH. This prophecy aims straight at the crucifixion. It does not mean that Christ was a sinner, but only that he was regarded and treated as one. Jesus was numbered with the transgressors (the two thieves), being crucified in the midst of them, one on the right and one on the left. (Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27; Luke 23:32; John 19:17.) The thought seems to be that although it was intended for Jesus to be buried with the wicked, he was instead buried in the tomb of a rich man. Please see next point.

(9) JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, WOULD BE WITH THE RICH IN HIS DEATH. Joseph of Arimathaea, fulfilled this prophecy. The record says, "And when even was come, there came a rich man from Arimathaea, named Joseph who also himself was Jesus' disciple: this man went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded it to be given up. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb,

which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed." (Matthew 27:57-60)

(10) THE DAYS OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT WOULD BE PROLONGED AFTER HAVING GIVEN HIS LIFE AN OFFERING FOR SIN. Jesus' days would be prolonged after his death on the cross into the infinite future. He, according to Isaiah, would live beyond the grave. The Hebrew writer says, concerning Christ, "He ever liveth." (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus said of himself, "I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:17-18.)

(11) THE PLEASURE OF JEHOVAH SHALL PROSPER IN THE SUFFERING SERVANT'S HAND. Jesus would not die in vain but would fully accomplish the purpose of his mission. He would completely and satisfactorily achieve God's purpose for the redemption of fallen man, and, in turn, Jehovah would be pleased to accept his innocent suffering as an offering for sin. The pleasure of Jehovah prospering in his hand means that Christ would accomplish God's plan and the Gospel would prosper. Evidently, one of the most pleasing things in all the world is for the Gospel to flourish, to leap and spread over all boundaries and obstacles.

(12) BY KNOWLEDGE THE SUFFERING SERVANT WOULD JUSTIFY MANY. In the text Jehovah is the speaker but to whose knowledge does he refer? Is it the Suffering Servant's knowledge of Jehovah, or is it the sinner's knowledge of the Servant? Either is possible. However, it seems to us that the meaning is that the sinner is justified by his knowledge of the sacrificial work of the Servant. Certainly, this is taught in the New Testament (John 6:44-45; Romans 10:17).

(13) THE SUFFERING SERVANT WOULD TRIUMPH AND DIVIDE THE SPOIL. From a lowly, oppressed sufferer, Jesus would emerge exalted, great and strong as a victorious warrior receiving the spoil. Paul said that Christ "despoiled the principalities and the powers" and that "he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2:15.) This slain Lamb is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing (Revelation 5:12.)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the scroll of Isaiah, Philip preached Jesus. In our Bibles the section is now identified as Isaiah chapter fifty-three. While we do not know exactly what Philip preached, we have suggested thirteen points he could have touched on

e.g., (1) Christ would not be attractive to the Jewish Nation; (2) he would be despised and rejected of men; (3) he would endure sorrow and grief; (4) he would suffer for man's transgressions; (5) he would be silent when on trial; (6) he would die under a judicial sentence; (7) he would die by violence; (8) he would be numbered with the transgressors; (9) he would be with the rich in his death; (10) his days would be prolonged after his death; (11) Jehovah's pleasure would prosper in his hand; (12) by knowledge many would be justified; and (13) the Suffering Servant would triumph and divide the spoil.

After Philip preached "Jesus" from Isaiah chapter fifty-three the Eunuch knew what he must do to be saved. Though Acts 8 does not say that Philip preached on baptism, evidently he did for the Ethiopian said, "Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36.) The rest is now history. Philip baptized him into Christ. (Acts 8: 38-39.)

Perhaps our preaching brethren would do well to imitate Philip by preaching Jesus from the Old Testament. Especially is this so since we live in a time when the Old Testament is castigated by so many.

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The Three Dispensations

By Richard England

The Bible is an account of God's dealing with man. As one studies the Bible, he will find that God has not always required the same things of men. There are three ways in which God has dealt with man.

The first period of time we call the "patriarchal" age. The word patriarch means father or head of the household. God at that time dealt with the heads of each household. The fathers worshipped for the entire family. This is one of the ways we know that Cain and Abel were married and had a family, at least family responsibilities. It was the duty of each father to offer sacrifice for the family. This is what Cain and Abel came to do. During this period God selected Abraham, the patriarch, and separated him from the others in the world that through him he might send the savior of mankind. Abraham's son was Isaac. Isaac begat Jacob, who was also called Israel. His twelve sons became the heads of twelve tribes who together composed the nation of Israel.

When Israel had been in bondage to Egypt for over four hundred years God raised up Moses to lead them into the land God had selected for their habitation. After leaving Egypt, while they were in the wilderness, Moses received from God a law for the Israelites and thus ushered in the second period or age. This is called the Mosaic dispensation. This was not intended to last until the end of time, but only until Jesus, the Christ, should come. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Galatians 3:23-25). In order to help men better understand the things of salvation, the orders of the law of Moses and the tabernacle were figures and shadows of things of reality in Jesus. (Hebrews 9:9; 10:1). Jesus was born under the law and lived under it. (Galatians 4:4). He is the only man who lived without breaking it in any way.

When Jesus died on the cross, the law was fulfilled (Matthew 5:18), and he "took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Colossians 2:14). Now God commands us to hear his Son. (Hebrews 1:1, 2). All authority is given to Jesus. (Matthew 28:19). God had planned it this way all along. (Deuteronomy 18:1-19). This is the third, and last, period of time. It is called the "last days" many times in the Bible. By this, God does not mean that the end is just any day now, even though it may be, but that this is the last period of time and the last way in which he will deal with man. When Jesus comes again, the end of the world will occur. In order for us to be ready for this event, we must obey the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

At the end of this age, when Jesus comes again, the judgment will take place and the earth and heavens will be dissolved. (Peter 3:9-14). There will not be a period of a thousand years in which Jesus will reign as king. He is now King, and will remain so until he comes again. (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Where Did We Go Wrong?

By Bill Graddy

How many times have we heard and read of parents saying of a wayward child, "Where Did We Go Wrong?" Many parents have suffered untold anxiety because of their inability to find the answer to this question.

It is true that parents may have failed to "... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4). However, it is equally true that children may disobey their parents instead of obeying them. (Ephesians 6:1). "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Proverbs 22:6, is a general statement and not an iron clad positive. If it were iron clad, the fault would be the parents, and this would teach the impossibility of falling from grace. (Study Ezekiel 18:20; Galatians 5:4). The playmates of children and the ones they date and later marry may contribute greatly to their going astray. (1 Corinthians 15:33).

In Matthew 26:41, Jesus said, "... the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The "spirit" is our spirit which consists of the intellect, the emotions and the will. The "flesh" is the carnal part of man governed by himself instead of God. The Christian is to be controlled by the law of God. He uses his mind or heart (same) to do this. The sinner also uses his mind or heart but controls himself instead of submitting to God's will. Both Christians and sinners use their minds or hearts to live the life they choose. Therefore, children use their free moral agency to not only disobey their parents but God. Many factors both positive and negative may be attributed to the behavior of children. The parents may be to blame, but children themselves are to blame. Children have gone astray from the best of an environment. The prodigal son decided to return. If parents have failed, then the worry belongs to them. Hopefully, they will see the error and be able to rectify it in themselves and their children. Children who have made their own mistakes will likewise suffer the consequences. Again, it is hoped that some of the good seed will come up, and they will repent of their sinful ways.

Life is learning. For some it has been difficult. Christ is the answer, and those answers are found in the New Testament. Therefore, study and learn these answers; then practice them! This will help you understand the blame and help you see how you may prevent these things from happening again. Where sin is involved, the New Testament will tell you how to get forgiveness. Do what it says, God will forgive you, and then you must forgive yourself, forget the past, and live for Him the rest of your life and heaven will be your home.

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If you are looking for wholesome society, remember that the church is God's society -- not a perfect people, but the best people on earth."

Let Us Reason Together

God spoke to his people in Isaiah 1:18, and ask that they "reason together" with Him. God created man with this ability and He expects man to use reason in all matters, especially those things that pertain to his soul. Therefore let us "reason".

GOD IS STRICT WITH LAWBREAKERS

More than six-hundred-thousand of God's chosen people could not enter into the land of promise because they did not BELIEVE it necessary to OBEY God's commands, Hebrews 3:19. WILL HE NOT ALSO BE STRICT WITH US? YES INDEED! Listen to Him! In speaking of the fate of the disobedient Israelites, He then tells us, "Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Hebrews 3:12. Please note, these people, DEPARTED FROM God, they could not depart from some place which they had never been. We too, CAN DEPART from God. We too, can NOT depart from some place which we have never been. Therefore, we too, CAN FALL! IF IT COST THE BLOOD OF JESUS TO FORGIVE OUR SINS, DON'T YOU THINK THAT SIN IS IMPORTANT TO GOD?, (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Yes we BELIEVE all the wonderful things God has done for man and the great blessings he has promised! Then WHY do we not BELIEVE that these blessings carry the price tag God has placed on them? We MUST OBEY GOD TO BE SAVED, (Matthew 7:21). IS THIS UNREASONABLE? WHY SHOULD IT BE? The same Book that tells us that God LOVES us, tells us to disobey Him is to be LOST, (Mark 16:16). Is this unreasonable? Is it not God who is sinned against? Is it not God who gave His Son? If it is TRUE that Christ died for our sins, is it not also TRUE that we MUST OBEY GOD TO HAVE THESE SINS FORGIVEN. Let us reason: If one is true the other is also! We cannot believe one and reject the other, for both are TRUE!

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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