

*"Who has truly believed our revelation? To whom will Yahweh reveal His mighty arm?
He sprouted up like a tender plant before the Lord, like a root in parched soil.
He possessed no distinguishing beauty or outward splendor to catch our attention.
Nothing special in his appearance to make us desire him!
He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows who was no stranger to suffering and grief.
We hid our faces from him in disgust and considered him a nobody, not worthy of respect!
Yet he was the one who carried our sicknesses and endured the torment of our sufferings!
We viewed him as one who was being punished for something he himself had done,
As one who was struck down by God and brought low!
But it was because of our rebellious deeds that he was pierced, and because of our sins that he was
crushed!
He endured the punishment that made us completely whole, and in his wounding we found our healing!
Like wayward sheep, we have all wandered astray! Each of us turned from God's path and chose our
own way!
Even so, Yahweh laid the guilt of our every sin upon him!" (Isaiah 53:1-6, Passion Version)*

In last week's lesson on Isaiah 52:11-15, we saw how God, speaking through His prophet, Isaiah (having moved on the heart of Cyrus, king of Babylon), commanded the Israelites to get up and leave the land of their exile (in Babylon) and return to Jerusalem! And, as they went, not to "touch any unclean thing" and, for those "carrying the sacred vessels" (which, 50 years earlier, had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar) to "purify themselves" (as they prepared to resume their worship in the temple upon their return). And he assured them that they didn't have to go in haste, or as fugitives (as had been the case in their exodus from Egypt), "for the Lord (who had prepared the heart of Cyrus), would go before them, and the God of Israel would be their rear guard"!

Then we saw how Isaiah (in verses 13-15)--based on a "revelation" from God--gave what amounts to "a preview" of how God would use "His servant" (which we now identify as Jesus, the Son of God, and God Incarnate, Whom He would send into the world!) to accomplish his redemptive plan, and provide salvation! And, not just for Israel but for all the nations of the world! His servant "will succeed" (in accomplishing that task), Isaiah "reveals," and be "high and lifted up, and greatly exalted;" but (in the process) "His appearance will be marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men"! Kings will be shocked speechless, and in awe, when they see what would come to pass!

And what would come to pass "in that day to come" was "revealed" by Yahweh to Isaiah who found it so amazing and unfathomable (in his own thinking, apparently), that he would begin his prophetic account of it (in Isaiah 53) with a two-part rhetorical question, wondering who would "truly believe" the message of the gospel of Christ, and by whom, and "to whom He (speaking of Christ) would be "revealed"! John (in John 12:37-39) would later refer to how this prophecy was fulfilled, when writing about how people during the time of Christ's earthly ministry "did not believe in Him despite seeing Him performing so many signs"! And the apostle Paul, in Romans 10:16, would also refer to this same question raised by Isaiah, while writing about how "faith comes from hearing the word of Christ" (by "revelation"!), and that "whoever hears it, and believes it, and "calls on the name of the Lord (after the prompting of the Holy Spirit!) would be saved--while recognizing that "not all who would hear the "good news" of the gospel would "take heed to it," or "truly believe," and be saved)! Wow!

And that explains why Isaiah would begin chapter 53 by raising the rhetorical (and heart-rendering!) question of who would "truly believe," and by whom, and to whom, the message of Christ would be

"revealed" (implying, as Motyer notes, that it was only through "divine revelation" (and the ministry of the Holy Spirit!) that the hearers of this message--this "revelation"-- (about the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the "good news" of the gospel) would, or could, "truly believe" it (and be gloriously (!) "saved"))!

And so, after raising the question in verse 1, Isaiah proceeds, beginning in verse 2, by giving a prophetic account of the person and work of Jesus Christ (who's not specifically named in this passage, but who Isaiah's obviously describing!--here portraying Him as "the Suffering Servant" who (Galatians 4:4 says) "God would send, in the fulness of time," to make "redemption for fallen mankind" possible!

- In verse 2, Isaiah writes that "He" (the "eternal" Son of God who, other Scripture reveals, was born 'as a babe, in a stable, in the little town of Bethlehem') would "grow up before Him" (Growing up, it turns out, in poverty-like conditions, in a carpenter-shop environment, in the despised city of Nazareth, but under the watchful eye of His heavenly Father every step of the way)!
- Isaiah likened Him (verse 2 continues) "to a tender shoot, and a root out of parched ground; as one having no stately form or majesty that we should look upon him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to him"! (Indicating his commitment, as God in the flesh, to fully experience the identity of an ordinary, and non-descript, "fallen man," of earthly origin, with none of the emblems of royalty and no beauty to behold him, living during a difficult time and a place, which Jim Battle described (in our session last night) as "a failed and captive nation on spiritual life-support"!
- Verse 3 says, "He was despised and forsaken of men (the object of scorn), a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (not that He was an "incessant sorrower" Himself, Motyer notes, but that He took on our sorrows and struggles) and, like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised and we did not esteem Him!" (The Passion version says "He possessed no distinguishing beauty, or outward splendor to catch our attention"! And John 1:10 notes that "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him!")

(Wow! Just to pause at this point, and try to grasp the idea (the fact! More than that! The "wonder"!), that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who was intimately involved with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, in creating the world, and all that's in it (as we know it--and don't!) Think about it! The stars and the universe, and the heavens! And so much more "in the great beyond," that we don't know about and can't fathom! And then, us! The DNA! The molecules and neutrons and protons, and atoms, and whatever! And that He would be sent by the Father into our fallen world as a man (like us!)! But "with no beauty to behold"--and not the perfect physical specimen of a man, that we might have expected! Then, to be rejected by the very ones He created, and came to save! And to be brutally beaten! "Marred beyond any man!" And (would you believe) crucified! And shedding His blood--and being the "supreme sacrifice" for sin! The "substitutionary atonement"! For us! Wow! O, the wonder of it all!)

Isaiah continues, in verse 4:

- "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried, yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted!" (Pointing back to the book of Leviticus, and the law, where the blood of an animal, one without blemish, was used as a sacrifice to "atone" for one's sin! Symbolizing (and picturing what would come about through His awesome "substitutionary atonement"!)

All the above verses (and our vain efforts to capture their full meaning), give reason, Moyter points out, as to "why Christ, the Messiah, was met with such dismissiveness (!)--from those He came to save (!), and why it was so hard for people to believe that He could be the Lord who had come to save"! But how He able to actually accomplish that 'redemption for us is even more amazing and unfathomable--and it's explained by Isaiah, in this passage most clearly, and unequivocally (and for the first time in the book of Isaiah!) in the following remaining verses of this lesson (with more to come in our lessons to follow)!

- In verse 5, Isaiah writes, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed!" (II Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him!" Again pointing to His "substitutionary atonement")!
- And, in verse 6! "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each one of us has turned to his own way! But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him!" (Jesus Himself, in John 10:1, would later explain how He would fulfill this prophecy, and accomplish what He came in the world to do, with these memorable words: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep! (Leaving His disciples totally baffled! And we're all familiar with the poetic and reverberating words of Psalm 23 where our Lord is portrayed as "the great Shepherd of the sheep," and we, as wandering sheep, with all our limitations and desperate dependency on Him!

I Peter 2:24-45 adds this: "And He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds we were healed! For you were continually straying like sheep, but now we have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your soul!"

And so, although there's more to consider in Isaiah 53 (which we'll take up in next week's lesson), we closed last night's session by returning to "the question" raised at the start! The big question! "Who has believed his (Isaiah's) report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord (speaking of Christ!) been revealed?" A message which, as Motyer points out, is given "by revelation"(!)--and which, as we learned, is a "must"(!), in order for anyone to be saved!)

Most, if not all, of us--as Men of the Bible--I would assume, know what it means to have been exposed to the message (or the "revelation") of the gospel of Christ (as "revealed" in God's inspired Word) and, upon prompting by the Holy Spirit, have "truly believed" and, by faith, received Christ as Savior for the forgiveness of our sin--and thus have experienced salvation (or redemption) in Christ! And therefore are able to stand as "righteous" before a Holy God! That being a righteousness not of our own, but of the "righteousness of Christ"! A righteousness "imputed" to us by Christ, by reason of His "sacrificial atonement" for us on the cross!

Colossians 2:13-14 perhaps explains it best: "when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross"!

Thank you, Lord, for your Word! For the divinely-inspired Word of God! And for the "divine revelation" you have given us, about the "good news" of the gospel of Jesus Christ, prophesied by Isaiah in Isaiah 53 (among other places), and fulfilled, and further explained in the writings of the New Testament!

"What more can we say than to you He has said...to you whom to Jesus for refuge have fled"!

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

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