

## GOD'S MASTERPLAN (Is. 52 & 53)

In the world's opinion, what we are doing this evening is senseless and outdated ... carrying on a tradition of remembering Someone Who died thousands of years ago. ... But the reason we are remembering the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, - in preparation for coming to the Table, - is in anticipation of His return, , <sup>1</sup> *Cor.* 11:26 **For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.** [*cui revelatum est; ἀπεκαλύφθη*]

Isaiah was writing about seven hundred years (739-681 BC) before Jesus was born and yet, chapter fifty-three is so descriptive of the life and ministry of the Saviour (vv.1-4), of His death (v.5-8), and burial (v.9), of His resurrection and glorification (v.10-12). ...

Before we come to these verses though, which speak of the Suffering Servant, we are presented in chapter fifty-two with what we could entitle **The Blessed Saviour, - His Exaltation**, *Is.* 52:13 **he shall be exalted and extolled.** The *Complete Jewish Bible* translates this verse, *See how my servant will succeed! He will be raised up, exalted, highly honoured!* ... This follows on from the prophet's earlier exclamation, *Is.* 52:7 **Thy God reigneth!** ... *Here* is where we get the full picture of God's masterplan for the redemption of His people. It began in eternity.

When we look at privileged people and see their children becoming successful, we understand the benefits of being born into such advantaged families which can afford the very best. ... But the Lord Jesus, He was different because He did not take His 'very best', - His riches, - with Him when He left Glory, neither did He bring any of the authority He had there, *II Cor.* 8:9 **though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes he became poor, that ... through his poverty [we] might be rich.** He did not bring any of the beauty of Heaven to wrap Himself in, but instead, He left it behind for the next verse in Isaiah says, *Is.* 52:14 **As many were astonished at thee; ... 'Astonied' [shamem]** is the translation of a Hebrew word which means those who would look upon Him would be 'shocked' and 'horrified' at how they saw Him ... *his visage [appearance] was so marred [disfigured]* more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.

That's a very brief picture Isaiah is showing us, - just like a 'dip in the water', - before we enter chapter fifty-three. Seven hundred years before Jesus came to this earth ... before He suffered a single agony, - inspired by the Holy Spirit, - the prophet is presenting the Saviour's **exaltation**, <sup>15</sup> **So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.** ... Already we know how the story ends, even before it began ... It ends with Christ's triumph!

It is important in these days not to become despondent at the apparent successes of ungodliness for here is the encouragement! Yes, Isaiah describes the Suffering Servant's face being marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men (52:14). Yet, what looked to men a humiliating defeat was in the eyes of God the greatest achievement ever accomplished, as Jesus Himself understood when He prayed to His Father, **Jn. 17:4** I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. ... And forty days after He rose from the dead, He ascended into Glory, - He returned to Heaven, - and He sat down at the right hand of His Father. ... **The blessed Saviour and His exaltation.** Then when we come to the fifty-third chapter we see ...

**The Broken Saviour and His Humiliation,** ... He went from **exaltation to humiliation**, **Is. 53:1** Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? **2** For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. **3** He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

But notice this ... The psalmist refers to God's creation, **Ps. 8:3** When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers ... When God delivered Israel from the captivity in Egypt, **Ex. 13:3** by strength of *hand* the LORD brought you out ... But here is something even greater for to save lost Hell-deserving sinners *the arm of the LORD was revealed* ... What does that mean? ... When you go out to work and you are going to work hard, you put your everything into it ... and what is it you do? ... You roll up your sleeves! You 'reveal' your arms, and you put everything you are and have into the work you are doing ... and that is what Jesus did when He left Heaven and came into this world.

First of all, He grew up among the people, - they saw Him take His first steps, they heard Him say His first words, they watched Him play in the street, they came to the workshop of Joseph where they saw Jesus work as a carpenter ... Isaiah's prophecy was happening in front of their eyes, **Is. 53:2** For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. But the purpose for which He was born was to die, He became **3** despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ...

He died for you and me on the cross, and He could not have given anymore for He gave His all! ... He ‘rolled up His sleeves’ and ‘revealed His arm’ ... **Phil. 2:6** Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: **7** But made himself of no reputation ... That means He set aside the matchless glory that was His, as belonging to the Godhead ... He left behind His place at the side His Father, - His seat was empty in Heaven when He came to this earth ... He left the worship of the angels and citizens of Heaven to be conceived of a virgin, and he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8). ... From **The blessed Saviour** and **His exaltation** in Is. 52:13 to **The broken Saviour** and **His humiliation**.

And the purpose He did it ... **The Bruised Saviour** and **Expiation**, **4** Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **5** But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with 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 hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

*Expiation* is one of those important words of Christian doctrine which describes that even though we were sinners by choice and by nature, God removed the guilt through the payment of the penalty settled by the shedding of His Son’s blood. As Jesus took upon Himself our punishment, the righteous wrath of God towards us was averted, - that is called *propitiation* ... and it simply means because Jesus paid the penalty of our sin, we do not need to.

This is the central truth of this chapter ... This is the heart of the Gospel ... the innocent Servant dying as the Sacrifice for the sins of His people.

He took my sins and my sorrows,  
He made them His very own;  
He bore the burden to Calvary,  
And suffered and died alone.

When He was wounded for our transgressions, He wasn’t being punished because of anything He had done, but because of the sins we had committed. The Son of God was crushed under the heavy burden of our sin ... Read it like this, **6** the LORD hath laid on him [all] the iniquity of us all. ... He bore *all* our sin in His own body on the cross.

He was chastised and beaten with many stripes. He Who knew no sin left Heaven’s glory to be made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of

God in Him (II Cor. 5:21) ... And because He achieved His purpose, we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1) for there is no longer any condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). ... **The Bruised Saviour – Expiation** ...

Following on in this chapter we then see **The Burdened Saviour and His Submission**, <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. <sup>8</sup> He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. <sup>9</sup> And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

He never replied to their wickedness. He would not come down from the cross, even though He *could* have. He submitted to the will of His Father ... the same will that was established in the Council Room of Glory before the foundation of the world. ... And one after another his opponents would come ... Caiaphas, the chief priests and elders, Pilate, Herod ... and the soldiers who mocked and beat Him ... the people of Jerusalem, the people of Judea, the people from all over His beloved land, and they mocked Him ... but *still* He remained submissive to His Father's will. ... He had *right* on His side, and yet He gave Himself as the Lamb slain on man's most cruel of altars. ... Crucified with criminals, as a criminal ... and before God, He died bearing our sin. ...

But lastly we see **The Beloved Saviour and His Satisfaction**, <sup>10</sup> Yet it pleased the LORD [ *it was the Lord's will* ] to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt 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. <sup>11</sup> He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup> Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

As this chapter closes, the prophet explains the work of the cross from God's perspective. Even though Jesus was crucified by the hands of wicked men, His death, - as Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-23), - was wonderfully determined beforehand. Jesus, therefore, was not a martyr, nor was His death an unfortunate incident, or a plan that had gone terribly wrong ... No, He was God's predetermined Sacrifice for the sins of His people.

In His resurrection that followed, He triumphed over every enemy for when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men (Eph. 4:8). By being obedient to the cross, **Phil. 2:9** God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: **10** That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... **11** And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ... That is on a par with what Isaiah prophesied, - with which we began our study, - **Is. 52:13** Behold, my servant ... shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

That's because He carried out the work His Father had sent Him to do ... On the cross, the Judge took the place of the accused and He Himself paid the just and terrible demands of God's perfect Law. ... And as He poured out His soul unto death, He numbered Himself with the transgressors, - one on either side of Him ... **Jn. 3:16** God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.

God's grace alone justifies the ungodly but that grace must be received by trusting in Christ as Saviour ... and that is how you become declared righteous before Him with the record of sin no longer held against you. Your debt before God has been wiped clean. It has not been a 'free redemption', because there is no such thing ... there was nothing 'free' about what Jesus did on the cross, - it *cost* Him, and yet, in His great love wherewith He loved us (Eph. 2:4), through grace, He set within our hearts the gift of saving faith to believe in Him.

It means that now I have eternal life and it is because Jesus died for me and by His grace I'm saved. It is nothing of me or of you for, - just in case we would be inclined to steal any of the glory, - it is all of Christ, for **Eph. 2:8** it is the gift of God: **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast.

This week our nation will be remembering with others the brave men and whose lives were cruelly snatched away on the beaches of Normandy. Looking back on it though ... what did they achieve? Has there been peace since? Have the weapons of war been turned into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks (Is. 2:4)? ... No, not at all because in the intervening years, many men and women have died in warfare all over the world. ... What has the death of *our* Saviour accomplished though? He has accomplished all He left Glory for ... the salvation of His people ... and there is a great day coming when He will present His Redeemed before His Father as His Bride, **Eph. 5:27** not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but ... holy and without blemish.

What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see,

When I look upon His face, the One Who saved me by His grace;

When He takes me by the hand and leads me through the Promised Land,

What a day, glorious day, that will be.