

Isaiah 53, etc.

Part 1

Speaker	Norman Anderson
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[00:00:00] Please read Isaiah chapter 53.

This chapter is the central chapter of what I might call the second major division of the book.

This section commences with a word of comfort for God's people and for Jerusalem. In chapter 40, all hangs upon the intervention of God in the person of His servant, Jehovah's servant.

We learn from chapter 41 that Israel had miserably failed as Jehovah's servant. They are all vanity, their works are nothing, their molten images are wind and confusion. Isaiah 41 verse 29, hence God has been robbed of His portion in Israel.

[00:01:06] In chapter 40 verse 3, we have an obvious prophecy respecting John the Baptist as Jehovah's messenger. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. This prophecy was fulfilled literally according to Matthew chapter 3 verse 3 in the mission of John the Baptist.

He was sent to prepare Jehovah's way.

And in John chapter 1 verse 30, calling attention to Jesus, the Baptist said, This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is preferred before me, for he was before me.

[00:02:02] An evident pointer to the pre-time glory of the person of the Son of God. The Jesus of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old.

This second section of Isaiah, covering chapters 40 to 66, closes with the regathering of Israel.

Chapter 66 verse 20, and their presentation as an offering to Jehovah. Also, all nations and tongues shall be gathered to witness the glory of the Lord. Verse 18, the grand finale of the way of Jehovah, which is introduced in chapter 40, with the presentation of Messiah, is that it shall come to pass, all flesh shall come to worship [00:03:01] before me, saith the Lord. See chapter 66, the basis of all, the blessing of Israel, the blessing of the Gentiles, the glory of the Lord, all is brought powerfully before us in chapter 53.

The importance of this prophetic chapter is emphasized, as we note its frequent citation in the New Testament.

Some 14 references at least occur throughout the New Testament to this chapter. As a matter of interest, we note that there are 66 chapters in this prophetic book. There are also 66 books in the Bible.

The first section of Isaiah covers 39 chapters. There are 39 books of the Old Testament. [00:04:03] The second section of Isaiah covers 27 chapters.

There are 27 books in the New Testament.

The central feature of this prophetic section of Isaiah is chapter 53, and the central fact of the New Testament is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jehovah's servant served unto death in the book of Isaiah, and certainly in the New Testament our Lord Jesus Christ became obedient even unto death, and that, the death of the cross, Still might we consider then this 53rd chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. We might first say that in chapter 50 Christ's deity introduces his humiliation.

[00:05:09] See for instance verse 3 of that chapter, I clothe the heavens with blackness, the language of the governor of creation. In verse 4 he is in the learner's place.

Then in verse 6 he is humiliated and maltreated by the man who had witnessed him in the grace of his humility.

Here we might say in chapter 53 his humiliation introduces his glory.

Verse 1 of our chapter then, the prophet laments the unbelief of those who were peculiarly the subjects of the mercy of God.

[00:06:01] The arm of the Lord is a symbol of the power of God, so often exerted for the overthrow of his enemies and also the salvation of those who trust in him.

See for instance chapters 51 verse 9, 52 verse 10, 53 verse 1, 59 verse 1, 62 verse 8, 63 verse 5, for uses of this, the arm of the Lord, and on occasion as in chapter 53 the arm of the Lord seems to be personified.

Verses 2 and 3, he shall grow up before him.

[00:07:01] This is the arm of the Lord growing up before the Lord.

To him, Christ in the days of his flesh, and all the charm that marked him was a root out of a dry ground.

What a sight for God to look down upon that blessed man moving here. The root, life and fruitfulness and all the potentialities were there in him, and yet a root out of a dry ground.

Israel was the dry ground. There was no sustenance for our Lord there. All his support was drawn from above.

To Israel he was an object of derision and scorn.

Verses 4 and 6, as the language of that people when conviction lays hold upon them, as it [00:08:08] surely shall, they shall learn the truth yet of the sympathetic as well as the sacrificial and redemptive sufferings of the holy sin bearer.

Verse 4 certainly emphasizes to us, as quoted in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 8, that our blessed Lord first bore in his spirit, feeling sympathetically that which he removed by his power.

He entered in the deep feelings of his heart into all that his people suffered. He suffered sympathetically in the acuteness of his sinless humanity, there for their sins [00:09:03] under the governmental hand of God. The day shall assuredly come when the sufferings of the holy sin bearer shall be rightly apprehended. Then shall they say in deep contrition, he was wounded for our transgressions, etc. The prophet Hosea has this day of atonement for Israel in mind when he says in his last chapter verses 1 and 2, O Israel, take with you words and turn to the Lord, see unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips.

[00:10:01] Then shall Israel find the words which they shall take in the day of their repentance, and they shall find them in Isaiah 53.

Verse 5, their sins are confessed as it were over the head of the scapegoat. See Leviticus chapter 16 verses 21 and 22.

Verse 6, they recognize the holy sufferer as the one upon whom sacrificially as it were the Lord's lot fell.

Leviticus 16 verses 8, 9, and 15.

True confession shall be produced from the lips of a repentant people. We have gone astray, we have gone our own way. [00:11:04] This was disobedience and rebellion, yet wondrous mercy the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Thus we have here in these verses the great antitype of the day of atonement. First, the righteous claims of God fully met by the blood of the sin offering, propitiation. Secondly, the guilt of the people met in their confession of their iniquities, their transgressions, their sins over the scapegoat, substitution.

Both gods were necessary on the day of atonement to set forth these two aspects of the one sacrificial and redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ when he offered himself through [00:12:08] the eternal Spirit without spot to God.

He by his spotless sacrifice eclipsed every sacrifice of the ceremonial system of Judaism, for it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to put away sin and make perfect the comers unto God. See Hebrews 10.

In our chapter again, verses 7 and 8, tell of the willing submission of the unresisting Lamb of God.

Tell of his unrighteous treatment, his being cut off, and withal the true reason for his death, for the transgression of my people was he stricken, wonderful Savior.

[00:13:10] Verse 9 attests by his burial in the rich man's tomb that there is a divinely fixed limit to the wicked activity of sinful men.

Just as Jehovah the Lord said to the waves of the sea, so to speak, as described in the book of Job, this far shalt thou come, and no further.

God takes care to attest his appreciation of the moral beauty of that spotless holy life. He was with the rich in his death because he had done no violence, and neither was any deceit found in his mouth.

[00:14:04] Truly like the Paschal Lamb, the Savior had passed under the scrutinizing eye of divine holiness, kept as it were from the tenth to the fourteenth day, and proved to be without either blemish or spot.

Verse 10, Deeper far than all his sufferings at the hands of men for righteousness' sake were his suffering at the hands of God for sin, and this mark you only and entirely in his sacrificial death.

He never suffered for sin sacrificially in his life, only in his death. And so we read, He Jehovah hath put him to grief.

[00:15:03] Verses 10 to 12, the grand issue of the redeeming and God-glorifying death of Jesus. One, he shall say his seed after his own kind would be brought into being as the fruit of his death.

Two, he shall prolong his days.

The truth of resurrection is implicit in this statement. The cross is not the end for him, no.

He shall come forth the mighty victor over death and the grave. Three, the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

He shall establish the will of God universally.

[00:16:01] Four, he shall see of the travel of his soul and shall be satisfied.

The fruit of his work shall be worthy of the work and of himself the workman, fitting recompense for the suffering and loss at Calvary.

Five, having by his death established a righteous basis of blessing for men, he shall be the great instructor in righteousness.

This expression, by the way, by his knowledge, shall my righteous servant justify many, would be better read by his knowledge, shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness. [00:17:01] So I repeat, he shall be the great instructor in righteousness. All who shall be brought into blessing before God shall be absolutely at rest before him, knowing that his claims, God's righteous claims, have been fully met in the redeeming work of Christ at Calvary.

So far as Israel is concerned, our blessed Lord shall be the great instructor under the new covenant.

We all shall be taught of God as to the validity of the finished work of the sin bearer at Calvary.

He will be instructed in righteousness.

Six, as instructed by him in righteousness, all shall know that there is not a cloud between [00:18:01] a holy God and themselves, for Christ in his death has borne their iniquities. Seven, alone once in the awful sufferings of Calvary, he shall not be alone in the recompense and glory.

He shall have companions then, so God declares, grand expression of his complete satisfaction with the finished work of Christ. I will divide him a portion with the great.

And in the unselfish activity of his love, proof that the cross had not exhausted the love of Jesus, he shall divide the spoils with the strong. Who are the great and the strong in that day of Christ's glory? Those who have shared rejection with him here shall share glory with him there. [00:19:01] All this, says God, for four reasons.

One, he hath poured out his soul unto death.

His death shall never be forgotten in the glory. Two, he was numbered with the transgressors.

His shame shall be fully answered. The world may despise and defame him. God honors him in heaven and shall manifest his approval of him in the world to come. Three, he bare the sin of many.

God answers with glory.

The love which took Christ into death for the blessing of others, the sin bearer, shall be publicly glorified.

Four, he made intercession for the transgressors.

[00:20:02] That prayer of his, uttered during the extremity of his sufferings on the cross, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, though a little accounted by the motley throng which surrounded the cross, has been fully evaluated in heaven and is added to these features which bring forth the reward of God to him in the day when the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

So we would simply and sincerely say, in conclusion of this brief look at this unique chapter in the book of Isaiah, to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

[00:21:01] Amen. Llama sabachthani, hark the cry from out the darkness, why hast thou forsaken me?

On that cross the righteous basis laid that sinners might go free.

Men could shoot the lip and scorn thee, many bulls surround thee there. They could barter for thy raiment, sinful men all this could dare. What it meant to thee, blessed Savior, sinners saved shall never know, when on Calvary's cross as victim thou God's wrath didst undergo.

[00:22:01] There thou didst exhaust the judgment, it is finished, loud thy cry.

From the unicorns God heard thee, never more, Lord, wilt thou die. Thou art not alone now, Savior, though the corn of wit has died.

Many brethren now surround thee, now thou art glorified.

To thy brethren thou declarest even now the Father's name.

In the midst thou least the singing, praise and worship him acclaim.

Jacob's seed, Lord, too shall own thee.

All the world must own thy name, all earth's kindreds give thee worship, all shall then [00:23:09] extol thy fame.

Now here is an appendix containing five triplets of verses concerning the suffering and the finally exalted servant of Jehovah.

Read in conjunction with Isaiah 53, chapter 52, verses 13 to 15.

In the first triplet, the end of chapter 52, Jehovah presents his servant, the one who [00:24:02] in his service took the lowest place, he shall be accorded the highest place.

Number two, verses one to three of chapter 53, the vice of the remnant describes his sorrow and suffering at the hands of the nation in his lifetime. Number three, verses four to six, then his suffering in sympathy in his pathway and then also at the hands of God under God's righteous judgment as bearing Israel's transgressions, iniquities and the chastisement of their peace. Number four, verses seven, eight and nine, the vice of the prophet speaks of the voluntary submission of the Savior, oppressed and afflicted, yet raising no voice in his own defense. [00:25:10] His unrighteous treatment, the apparent failure of his mission are voiced in the prophet's lament, 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.

His false accusers and murderers appointed him his grave with the wicked, but as we learned from Matthew 27, verses 57 to 60, he was buried in the rich man's tomb.

The reason given being that of his moral uprightness. His work in regard to sins was finished on the cross. Wicked hands could no more touch him. Those were loving hands which took his body down from the tray and laid it in the rich [00:26:06] man's tomb. Note, actually, this word, he was with the rich in his death, is a plural in his death.

Probably the Hebrew plural of greatness, denoting the greatness and intensity of the suffering of Christ in his death. No death like his, either for his suffering or for its glorious results.

Triplet number five, verses 10, 11, and 12, the voice of the prophet continues, telling of the suffering of the Savior at the hand of God in dealing with the sin question, but hastens on to the grand results, for he shall see his seed, a new generation to perpetuate [00:27:02] his moral features in a world gone far from God, the power and triumph of resurrection, lighten the darkness of Calvary's suffering, for he shall prolong his days, the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

Now in verses 11 and 12, the voice of Jehovah speaks again, and declaims the once crucified as his righteous servant, and outlines how he would reward him. In our first three verses, chapter 52, verses 13, 14, 15, Jehovah had said that his servant would be exalted, be extolled, be very high, then he showed the sorrow, the suffering, and the rejection which Messiah, his servant, must experience and endure, ere his supreme [00:28:05] glory could be reached.

Now Jehovah declares his answer to the sufferings of the Savior in these last three verses, how worthy he is of the glory and the honor which shall be heaped upon him, praise his blessed name forevermore.

Amen. Here are some notes on the lifting up of the Son of Man.

The scriptures I have reference to are Numbers 21, verses 4-9, John 3, verse 14, John 8, [00:29:07] verse 28, and John 12, verse 32.

In Numbers, the people were suffering as a result of their own sin. If God was to come in to effect deliverance for them, he must deal with the root of the matter.

To deal with it directly, as in themselves, would have meant their destruction. But he comes in in mercy to effect their deliverance, and also to make way for his leading them unhindered into the fullness of divine blessing on earth. For them, it meant freedom from the power and poison of the serpent, and a clear path to Canaan.

No doubt it is true that Israel learned then, as they never had before, their utter incorrigibility [00:30:04] as to their responsibility Godward. They were absolutely incapable of meeting the claims of God and coming into line with his sovereign will.

The serpent must fall, but the sword which executed the judgment wrought deliverance for them.

The serpent lifted up, became the object of attraction. Now being nothing meritorious in themselves, their most needs look away to another. The provision of God effecting that which was essential as to meeting his own just claims and the dire need of his people. The moment this is done, the power of the serpent is broken, the effects of its poison nullified.

This is all in the way of relief, or we might say the negative side of God's intervention [00:31:03] in mercy.

But on the positive side, they lived. Those who looped lived.

So today men are perishing under the power of Satan, dominated by sin, unholy and unfit for ought but eternal due.

But God has other thoughts in view, not the condemnation of the sinner but his blessing. God has it before him to introduce man into a sphere where he can know and enjoy God according to the way in which God would be pleased to reveal himself. How then can this be brought about? Left with man, the question is unanswerable. God comes in to give effect to his own eternal counsels for the blessing of man. He gives the only one he could, his only begotten son, the one who co-equal, co-eternal with [00:32:03] himself, knows him in all the intimacy and the relationship of son to the father.

The son comes into manhood that there might be wrought that which will be the avenue to the gratifying of the heart of God the Father. So we read, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life. This expression, lifted up, refers primarily to his death. See John 12, verse 33 for this.

Man has fallen, has come under judgment at the cross, in the person of the Son of man. Not that there was anything in him personally to call judgment forth, no, but on account of the sacrificial place which he had taken up for man's blessing. [00:33:02] He took it upon himself to clear the ground of that which stood in the way of God coming out in the bestowal of fullest blessing. Sin was taken into full account in judgment at the cross. Romans 8, verse 3, what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh of God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

The ground has been cleared, the Son of man has been lifted up. Not only is death but also exaltation involved in the expression lifted up, as used of course in the Philippian epistle.

Then counting Christ unworthy of a place on earth, lifts him up from it on the cross. God comes in and highly exalts him, that is, he highly lifts him up, lifts him up above [00:34:03] the highest heaven. See Philippians 2, verse 11 and also Ephesians 1, verse 20. As in this place of exaltation he is presented as an object for faith, but whosoever believeth in him, here is the magnificence of the thoughts of God and blessing. And it goes out to all who will believe, whosoever. The person who turns in faith to the exalted Christ does so because, like the bitten Israelite in Numbers 21, he acknowledges his lost condition, accepts God's judgment as to himself, looks away from self to Christ. The results accruing from the lifting up of the sin of man for the believer are twofold. He should not perish, he is delivered from the just condemnation of God, and he has eternal [00:35:01] life. Life is open to him, but it is eternal as contrasted to the Adamic life, which ends in death because of sin.

Not merely, of course, the duration of existence, but the richest character of life in the knowledge of God fully revealed.

Then like the type again he is given the spirit of an exalted Christ, John 4, verse 14, John 7, verse 39, to lead him positively into the enjoyment of that eternal life in all that it consists in, the knowledge of divine persons in their relationships and the sweetness of their affections. These, then, are the present effects for the believer of the lifting up of the sin of man. But this is not the entire effects of his lifting up. As rejected from his entrance into relationship with Israel, he anticipates the day when he [00:36:01] shall be known and acknowledged by them as the Christ of God and the sent one of the Father.

This was in a measure fulfilled in the day of Pentecost, at the descent of the Holy Ghost, when three thousand Jews were brought to see in the Jesus whom they had despised, rejected and crucified, God's anointed.

The full effects, however, are yet to be realized in that day when he shall be hailed with joyful acclamation as the Holy One, the Deliverer and Redeemer. When like Thomas, Israel, convinced by the evidence of their eyes, shall prostrate themselves before him, confessing, My Lord and My God.

Not only so, all nations shall call him blessed.

Things shall fall down before him, and gold and incense bring all people shall serve him. [00:37:03] In that day, truly, he shall be the acknowledged center. I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all to me of the vast universe of bliss, the center.