

## Isaiah Chapters 52b-53 Summary - John Karmelich

Title: What is the Gospel According to Isaiah and why should we care?

One of the many Bible verses that always amazes me is John 14:12. In essence, it states that Christians will do even greater works (than Jesus) after He ascended into heaven. That always puzzled me. I read of the disciples who saw Jesus raise people from the dead, heal diseases, and cast out demons! How are we going to do or see even greater miracles? It refers to the fact we will lead people to salvation. God chooses to work through people to lead others to Him. I also suspect the idea of greater things is, we'll see God (in heaven) save the entire nation of Israel. Let me explain: He saves people from all over the planet, but He never promises salvation to any nation except Israel. Another bible text that amazes me is Romans 11:25-26. The point of those verses is that once the Church era ends, a future day will come where God says, "That's a wrap for those who'll be part of the Christian church, but I'm (God) not done saving people!" Romans 11:25-26 says, all Israel will be saved then, along with other people willing to accept the fact Jesus is both God and Lord! The Revelation "show" implies millions will be killed, and that includes lots of Israelites. Israel will still exist as a nation after all that. It leads to Jesus "setting up shop" to rule there with them accepting Jesus as God. Jeremiah 31:31 is a key verse as it says when all that's done, God's going to have a new covenant (unconditional promise) with the "House of Israel". It means God will save all the Israelites in that land when Jesus returns!

OK John, that's good for Israel, I suppose, what does any of that have to do with Isaiah let alone what it is God calls us to do, be a witness for Him? The first thing to say is this text gives the Gospel message as clear as the other four gospels 700 years before Jesus came on the scene. This text is quoted not only in three of the Gospels, but also in the book of Acts, Romans and Peter's first letter. Let's just say New Testament writers were convinced it was talking about Jesus on the cross! What is fascinating to me is the Isaiah text is written "past tense" as if it's already a done deal! We get Isaiah was a prophet, so he's writing as if Jesus already died and was resurrected! This text reads like a confession, implying that the Israelites alive at that time will repent of not believing Jesus is THE promised Messiah. I realize there's some Jewish commentaries on this text that ponder how the Messiah can suffer, die and still rule. They will argue the text is about how Israel had to suffer for Israel's sake, which is a contradiction! In Isaiah here, the text is full of "He's", referring to Jesus and "our" referring to those Jesus suffered for!

OK enough about "them", let's discuss how any of this affects us! The obvious thing is the text is proof predictions of the suffering Messiah was "there" centuries before Jesus was on the scene. The text here focuses on Jesus' suffering! I always wondered why all that suffering was necessary? Part of it is so we can relate to the suffering we go through as believers in this lifetime! Another reason is for us to grasp that any and all suffering in this lifetime is nothing compared to eternity in heaven! Another reason for us to consider is that He suffered for our sake. John you're "preaching to the choir" again! We're called as believers to regularly focus on the fact Jesus suffered and died for OUR sins, as well as the Israelites who chose and will chose to believe the Gospel Message. It is not very comforting that a promise Paul makes is: all believers will suffer persecution (2nd Timothy 3:12). My simple point is one reason Jesus suffered is so we can relate to Him when we go through our suffering.

With that said, this Isaiah text is brief, but powerful enough that a bunch of the New Testament writers discuss it. Anyway, let me discuss what Isaiah wrote about the crucifixion 700 years prior to that even as a historical fact! (Crucifixion wasn't even invented for centuries after Isaiah wrote this!)

We last left off with Isaiah discussing the fact of Israel's long-term salvation as an entity. I suspect that is why Isaiah picked this spot to talk about Jesus' crucifixion, and specifically how the nation of Israel's going to repent one day of the fact they rejected Him! This text about Jesus (mostly on the cross) starts at Verse 13 of Chapter 52. That's why I broke Chapter 52 in two lessons! Verse 13 reads, "My servant will be high and lifted up" the first of many references to the cross. Verse 14 tells us a more about how Jesus was marred than ANY New Testament description of the cross. I thought about the fact after His Resurrection, the disciple Mary didn't recognize Jesus when she saw him at the tomb. Most likely Jesus was bruised so badly, it didn't even look like Him. (Reminds me of the expression, the only man-made thing in heaven is the scars left on Jesus!)

Verse 15 switches to good news. It's the fact leaders of many nations for 2,000 years now, honor Jesus as God. (Like I said the last lesson, do you really think there will be another descendant of King David who the world will honor more than Jesus?) That leads us to Chapter 53. It opens with the question of in effect, who believes Jesus is God? It's always amazed me that in a remote part of the largest empire (in terms of territory) to ever exist was the Roman one at its peak. Here was the death of a man no one would have heard of other than part of that Jewish population. Yet today, people all over the world are honoring Him as God!

The next few verses describe Jesus prior to the cross. How he was raised in an obscure location (Jesus wasn't born to royalty in this world)! In Verse 3 it states how he was rejected. The Israelites wanted a man to overthrow Rome, not die for our sins and that was a key reason for the rejection. I realize that's old news to us, but I want you to grasp how detailed a description of what happened to Jesus is written a good 700 years before He was born.

As we go through the rest of the chapter (it's not long) notice how it's written in PAST TENSE! A way to look at this is Isaiah is literally predicting how the Jewish nation (when Jesus rules) will confess that they ignored Him. Obviously, we can use this section as a model for us to admit our sins, but I want us to keep the context in mind, that in effect Isaiah's writing this about the Israelites in the future!

Notice the "He's" in Verses 4-5. They refer to Jesus "borne our griefs". Again, it's a future confession! In Verse 5 it says, "He was pierced for our transgressions". Again, crucifixion didn't exist in 700BC. It came about via the Persians centuries later and "perfected" by the Romans! The Hebrew word used for pierced literally means to die suddenly and painfully "before one is old". Speaking of confession, in the last part of Verse 5 says, "His chastisement brought us peace". Best to read it like a confession of sins, be it a Christian today or an Israelite after Jesus returns.

OK time to move on. The text emphasizes how much He suffered for the sake of any person who says Jesus is God and accepts His full payment. My question is why all the suffering? It's to emphasize how painful sin is to God and Jesus bore it all without complaining! Verse 9 makes a point all us Christians know well: Despite being treated like a criminal Jesus was buried in a wealthy man's tomb. There is an old Christian joke where the tomb owner says, "What's the big deal? It's only for the weekend!"

After some more verses emphasizing how much He suffered for our sake, the text switches in Verse 10 to say, "His offspring shall see His days". It reminds us, the Christian church is His offspring. We're to develop a close relationship with Him over the rest of our lives! Verse 12 talks about how He'll receive much from people in the future. Stop and consider all the gifts made in His Honor the last 2,000 years. What I want to emphasize is despite all His suffering (that God wants us to focus on here) His payment is for all of us who confess Jesus as God!

One final thing to mention: When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered about 100 years ago, among it was a complete Isaiah scroll, including this text. There were some Jewish groups at one time that tried to deny "53" was part of the original text! Just saying God has His ways to make His point clear!

Bottom line this section is the "Gospel According to Isaiah"! The great reminder for us Christians is for us to regularly remind us just how much it cost God for our benefit! With that said, I hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the links below. It's still a joy to study the Bible and again I'm grateful for you reading this. The rest of this is a bunch of links to questions you may have. If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Again, thanks again for reading this!