

Isaiah 53 Introduction, the Setting of the Jewel pt. 1

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This is the first in a series of messages on Isaiah 53 by Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg dean emeritus and professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary in LA Mirada California. The title of this series of six messages on the Old Testament title is the gem of Old Testament prophecy specifically Isaiah 53. The first message in this series is what I call the setting of the jewel. Let's look first at the place of the Book of Isaiah. Now the name Isaiah itself means the salvation of the Lord [Hebrew] Isaiah's book is larger in material than all the Minor Prophets put together. He is indeed the greatest of the Major Prophets the Lord Jesus Christ is admittedly the theme of all prophecy.

The apostle Peter through the Spirit of God in his first epistle the first chapter and the 11th verse indicates that Old Testament prophets together were witnessing were testifying concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. It's in Revelation 19:10 after the interpreting Angel the mediating angel we call him has given John those marvelous unveilings of Christ's coming in his glory after he's done that the Apostle John felt he wanted to worship the angel and was forbidden to do so. Whereupon the angel told him that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. What he meant specifically is that the testimony that goes out to the Lord Jesus Christ is the motivating force. It is the goal. It's the objective of all prophecy.

Now since the Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of all prophecy we should expect to find it in Isaiah and Isaiah as a matter of fact is replete it's full with predictions concerning the Lord Jesus. No other Old Testament book is quite so full. The style of the book is the highest Hebrew poetry in existence. Perhaps the greatest book in all of the Old Testament. The book is mentioned 80 times in the New Testament. The first reference to the Old Testament in the New Testament is in Matthew 1. It's Matthew 1 verses 22 and 23 and the first reference is from Isaiah and is Chapter 7. What transpired we're told happened that it might be fulfilled. What Isaiah the prophet said concerning the virgin bringing forth a son calling his name Emmanuel meaning God with us.

Isaiah has well been called the evangelist of the Old Testament. His book is so much like the Romans of the New Testament. Going from man's condemnation to the provision of justification the marvelous means whereby God justifies then God setting apart of a redeemed one to himself and then God glorifying himself and using that redeemed vessel for his own praise his own eternal glory. Now if the New Testament were lost God forbid but if the New Testament were lost a sinner could be led to Christ from many passages in Isaiah. For instance we need only turn to the very first chapter of Isaiah and we read in Isaiah 1:18. Come now and let us reason together said the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow though they be red like crimson. They shall be as wool. And then Isaiah has other messages concerning God's redeeming grace. For instance Isaiah Chapter 44. I'm thinking now of verses 22 and 23. Says the prophet. I have blotted out speaking for the Lord.

I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions and as a cloud thy sins return unto me for I have redeemed thee single heavens for the Lord have done it shout ye lower parts of the earth break forth into singing ye mountains oh forest and every tree therein for the Lord hath

redeemed Jacob and will glorify Himself in Israel. Isaiah 44:22. And then Isaiah 45. And notice here verse 22. Look unto me and be saved. All the ends of the earth. Remarkably simple so powerful so potent so effective so accurate. Only looking to the Lord by faith look unto me and be saved. All the ends of the earth for I am God and there's none else beautifully put. So we have here this one who is writing in such a way. The prophet Isaiah. That if a sinner were to find only the Book of Isaiah he could be led to Christ from different portions of this wonderful prophecy.

You remember it was in acts 8 where the Ethiopian eunuch was led to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ from the prophecy of Isaiah 53. Someone has said that Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 that portion has probably afforded the gospel preacher as many texts as many portions to preach the gospel as any in any single passage of the old testament of the Bible. The book divides the same as the Bible does, it happens to be divided in that way by those who divided the manuscripts into chapters. Isaiah himself didn't divide his book. His 66 chapters into that many chapters. It was all consecutive. There were no chapter divisions but how marvelous a help it is to have these chapter divisions. To have these verse divisions. But the book as we now have it in our hands divides the same as the Bible divides 66 books in the Bible. There are exactly 66 books in Isaiah.

In the Old Testament, there are thirty-nine books and there are 27 books in the New Testament. Isaiah divides Chapters 1 to 39 and then 40 to 66 and the New Testament is so beautifully paralleled in this portion of Isaiah that we call the second part Chapter 40 to 66 by the same marvelous servant of the Lord the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz not Amos That was another prophet his father's name Isaiah his father's name was Amoz. So the second part of the Book of Isaiah begins and ends. Just like the New Testament good way to jog your memory to aid the memory that just as the Bible divides at 39 books. So Isaiah divides at the 39th chapter

just as the New Testament begins with the testimony of John the Baptist and the New Heavens and the new Earth is its conclusion.

So the second part of Isaiah begins with John the Baptist's testimony the voice crying in the wilderness and Chapter 65 and Chapter 66 speak of the New Heavens and the new earth. It's interesting that in the New Testament you have three sections preeminently you have history in Matthew through Acts, five books. From Romans to Jude in the Epistles we have explanation in the book of the revelation we have prophecy. Isaiah 40 to 66 is in three sections. Also we're going to be seeing that it divides 40 to 66. Those chapters divide into forty to forty eight nine chapters forty nine to fifty seven. Nine more chapters. chapters fifty eight to 66. Third cycle of nine chapters. The heart of the New Testament is the death of Christ. And so the very middle portion as we're going to be seeing the very middle section the heart and core of the Third Division the second division Isaiah forty nine to fifty seven.

The very heart of that section is the death of Christ just as the heart of the New Testament is the Sacrificial Sacrifice the sacrificial redemption provided by our Lord Jesus Christ. So you have in the Book of Isaiah. No wonder that when St. Augustan shortly after his conversion Augustan was the Bishop of Hippo you remember an African led a very profligate life then God marvelously saved him through the word of God through the book of Romans I say it's no wonder that when St. Augustan shortly after his conversion asked Ambrose the bishop of Milan which of the sacred books he should begin to study first the answer he received was the prophecies of Isaiah and when we consider the statesmanship of the Prophet Isaiah it's little wonder that the celebrated British orator Edmund Burke you remember his great address on the reconciliation of the colonies considering then the statesmanship of Isaiah it's little wonder that

Edmund Burke habitually read from the prophecies of Isaiah before he went to sessions of parliament.

Truly, the theme of God's salvation is transcendently great. We're told that an earnest Christian man and a faithful reader of the Bible he was was once attacked by infidel that infidel said I do not understand nor do I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ can wash away my sin well the Christian answered you and Paul quite agree on that subject. The man was amazed he said how is that what he said will you please turn with me to the first chapter of first Corinthians and you will read together the eighteenth verse and they read for the preaching of the cross is to them that parish foolishness but unto us who are saved. It is the power of God. That infidel hung his head and he began soon to study the Bible in earnest. He was not long. Thank God he was not long in finding it to be God's power unto salvation to everyone that believe it to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Judgment is God's strange word but salvation is his mighty work and of that theme. Isaiah is beautifully full. We've seen then something of the place of Isaiah in the grand gallery of Bible truth and Bible disclosure. Now let's look at the portion a little more closely where Isaiah 53 is embedded. The portion of chapters 40 to 66 a general panoramic view a synthetic view will tell us concerning the whole book that in Chapters 1 to 35 we have prophecies numerous ones of punishment or judgment. First on the nation Israel the first 12 chapters on the nations of the world, chapters 13 to 23 and even farther along than that. And then on the world especially chapters 24 to 27 after 27 there's resumption of judgment on certain specific nations but on the nation Israel on the nations especially in the early part 13 to 23. Those chapters and then on the world were how the world reels and rocks staggers as a drunken man on the world. Sometimes

the portion call the apocalypse of Isaiah Chapter 24 to 27 chapters then one to thirty 35 prophecies of punishment in Chapter 36 to 39.

We have a parenthetical portion concerning the invasion of Sennacherib the great Assyrian king who invaded Judah in 701 B.C. during the reign of the godly King Hezekiah. So we have in chapters thirty six to thirty nine. That invasion of Sennacherib, the illness of Hezekiah and the indiscretion of Hezekiah. Now we come to chapters forty to sixty six we're getting the overall bird's eye view of all 66 chapters. Now we come to forty to sixty-six and we have three cycles. As I've already intimated previously chapters 40 to 48 speak of the comfort of God and those nine chapters center around one person, Cyrus. He is a picture. He is an illustration wouldn't be wrong even to say he's a type because he's called anointed one a type of the servant of the Lord. In the next nine chapters chapters 49 to 57.

The emphasis is on the commission of the Messiah centers about the true and perfect servant as a prophet as a priest and as a king chapters 58 to 66 dwell on the consummation the great completion of God's program and plan for Israel centers about Israel. The people are the servants so you have a type of the servant then you have the true and perfect servant. And then in the third series of nine chapters the people of the servant Israel, God's channel of blessing. It's interesting to notice that the middle section of chapters 49 to 57, which are the middle section of the last twenty seven chapters. The middle section is chapters 49 to 47. The middle chapter of that is Isaiah 53 and the middle verse of Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 because actually Isaiah 53 begins with Verse 13 of the previous chapter. Remember there were no chapter divisions in the original manuscript.

The middle verse of Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 is Isaiah 53:5 reading but he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities that chastisement the punishment of our

peace was upon him and with his stripes, we are healed. The theme throughout this wonderful Isaiah 52:3 to 53:12. Is the theme of the servant. Actually, it's been the theme from as we saw the early part of the second division of Isaiah from chapters 40 on this servant has caused a great deal of confusion among expositors. Commentators have been quite divided Orthodox on one side and liberal on another side. And the reason there's confusion here is because the servant is a complex person. There are passages where the servant undoubtedly speaks of Israel. For instance, Isaiah 41 and verse 8 this could not possibly refer to just one person. Isaiah 41:8 reads but thou Israel my servant Jacob whom I have chosen that's the whole nation.

The seed of Abraham. My friend thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth and called from the corners thereof and said unto thee thou art my servant I've chosen thee and not cast thee away fear thou not for I am with thee be not dismayed for I am thy God I will strengthen thee God pleading with them I will help thee I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness we'd say today my righteous right hand. It's a complex person. First of all, it's the whole nation. Then there are portions that speak of this servant as blind who is blind as my servant who is dumb as he is who is so unfeeling so unthinking so heedless so disobedient as he we read of it in Isaiah 42 18 to 20. Hear ye deaf and look ye blind that you may see who was blind but my servant or deaf as my messenger that I sent who was blind as he that is at peace with me and blind as the Lord's servant.

You see it can only mean Israel who have turned away and become spiritually blind and spiritually deaf obtuse thou sees many things but thou observest not you don't have the heart to understand it. His ears are open but he heareth not. So you have the servant of Israel in general en masse if you will. Then we have Isaiah 43 10 ye are my witnesses said the Lord and my servant whom I've chosen that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.

Before me there was no God formed neither shall there be after me. I even I am the Lord.

Besides me, there is no savior. I have declared, I have saved I have showed there was no strange god among you. Therefore you are my witnesses said the Lord. And I am God.

Now. Here are the true Jehovah's Witnesses. Israel of old and God expects to use them in the future as well. So here, you have not just Israel in general but those who are willing to be committed to be God's servants God's messengers to get the message out to the ends of the earth. So first, you have the great mass. Now you have a group if you will a remnant a special portion who come to the Lord and do his will. Isaiah 44:1. Yet now hear oh Jacob my servant and Israel of whom I have chosen thus says the Lord that made thee and formed thee from the womb who will help thee, fear not. Oh Jacob my servant and thou [Hebrew] whom I have chosen. I will Pour water upon him that is thirsty streams upon the dry ground I'll pour my spirit upon thy seed, they must be believer's, and my blessing upon thine offspring they shall spring up among the grass as willows by the water courses of course it's held out to the whole and if there be more among them that will believe that will trust.

So you have then Israel in the large unbelieving in mass then a certain portion believing just as in the Epistle to the Hebrews if you will but oh by the time you and I get to what are called the Four Great pre-eminent servants songs Isaiah 42:1-9 Isaiah 49 one to seven Isaiah fifty beginning actually with verse four and reading on through verse 8 and even verse 9. Isaiah 50 verses 4-9. Then Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12. Those marvelous passages about which whole books have been written they refer to not a corporate Israel either unbelieving or a remnant of believing ones but a single person at quite clear because all through these particular songs 42 1 to 9 49 1 to 7 ah Isaiah 50 Verse 4 and through verse 8 9 and Isaiah 52 13 to 53 12 you watch those passages carefully and you will see that there is the servant there spoken of in a way where he is separated.

He is seen distinct from the nation as a whole. How fitting that this greatest work of all redemption should be performed by the one called the preeminent servant.

It was a great Bible teacher great Hebrew scholar one who translated the New Testament into Hebrew. Professor Delage of Germany who said the servant concept in Isaiah the latter part of it can best be pictured by a pyramid if you will. The base is Israel as a whole. Then coming up higher the remnant in Israel and then at the apex at the very cone at the very top. One person the Lord Jesus Christ the one to whom God the Father has committed gloriously all his redemptive work for time and for eternity not just for Israel mark you but for the whole world. Think of it how fitting that it should be performed by the one called the preeminent servant God uses those who are his bond servants not those who would like to think of themselves as his patrons. There were two brothers we're told one Ahmed and the other Omar who wanted to do something to perpetuate their memory.

But Omar cut from the quarry. A great obelisk lifted it up beside the highway as we see these obelisks in Egypt. One there before St. Peter's in Rome. One at Central Park in New York. Well this Omar cut from the quarry just such a great obelisk, fitted it out lifted it up beside the highway he carved his name on it with many other inscriptions. There it stood for ages. A splendid monument but of no use to the world. The other one the older Ahmed dugged a well beside the desert highway and planted palm trees beside it in the course of time the spot became a beautiful oasis where the weary traveler stopped to quench his thirst and to feed upon the fruit. And to rest beneath the shade of the tall palms and all who pass that way bless the name of Ahmed the good.

Well that story illustrates two plans of life. One is to make for yourself a great name as high as the Obelisk of Omar. And just as useless, the other is to make your life like an oasis

where the weary may find rest and comfort and refreshment. God grant that may be your portion your objective your goal in life and mine as well. Our blessed Lord, hear it. The servant of the Lord the servant of Jehovah as he is so familiarly called our blessed Lord dig the well of salvation and countless numbers. Thank God have been refreshed thereby while they have abode. They have abided in him under the shadow of the rock in a weary land. [End]