

LESSON 5

April 4, 2021

Unit I: Prophets of Restoration

Finding Hope in the Midst of Oppression

Devotional Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

Background Scriptures: Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Luke 24:1-35

Print Passage: Isaiah 53:4-11

Key Verse—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. (Isaiah 53:5, KJV)

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He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Identify the connections between the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and the resurrected Christ in Luke 24.
- Affirm the joy of knowing that the Suffering Servant is the resurrected Jesus Christ.
- Share the story of the Suffering Servant, who is the resurrected Jesus Christ.

KEY TERMS

Afflicted (verse 4)—Hebrew: **anah (aw-naw')**: defile; to be bowed down or afflicted.

Servant (verse 11)—Hebrew: **ebed (eh-bed')**: slave; a person who performs duties for others.

Sheep (verse 6)—Hebrew: **tson (tsone)**: small cattle; sheep and goats; flock.

Suffering (verse 4)—Hebrew: **makob (mak-obe)**: pain; “sorrows” (KJV).

INTRODUCTION

The story is told of a mother who believed so strongly in the innocence of her condemned son that she hid herself in a huge bell to prevent it from tolling. If the bell did not toll at the time of the condemned prisoners' execution, they would be presumed innocent and set free. The force of the blows of the huge clapper she clung to cost her life but spared her son's. Without this act of selfless love, there would have been no hope for her son to escape death despite his innocence. This fictional mother is an example of a martyr, a person who is killed because of his/ her religious or other beliefs. She paid the ultimate price to save the life of her son. Her act of love is an object lesson of Jesus' words in John 15:13: “Greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Centuries earlier, the prophet Isaiah had foretold Jesus' selfless, sacrificial love in his prophecies concerning the ministry of the promised Messiah, the Suffering Servant of the Lord (see Isaiah 49:1–57:21). As a willing substitute for others, His suffering would pay the sin debt and guarantee hope for all who were under the oppression of sin. Isaiah's words brought a message of hope and comfort for the Babylonian exiles.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The prophet Isaiah was called and commissioned by God to minister to the nation of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and the city of Jerusalem (Judah's capital) during the reigns of Uzziah

(Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Isaiah responded enthusiastically to his call even though he knew his ministry was destined to fall on deaf ears and be rejected. Many Bible scholars conclude that Isaiah came from a distinguished family because he was afforded easy access to the king. His prophetic ministry condemned the empty ritualistic worship of Judah and the blatant idolatry into which so many of the people had fallen. Isaiah utilized a literary device known as foreshortening. His prophecies did not provide an exact sequencing or time of the events he predicted. It was as though he were standing on one mountain looking across to another while detailing events that were occurring in the valley between them. Isaiah predicted Judah's eventual defeat by the Babylonians and the subsequent exile of the survivors. He also predicted the glorious future God promised for Israel. Central to this message were Isaiah's predictions of the coming Messiah who would usher in the age of divine blessing as the Suffering Servant of the Lord.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Suffering Servant's Agony

(Isaiah 53:4-6)

KJV

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.

NIV

4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our *suffering*, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and *afflicted*.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like *sheep*, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The ministry of the Servant is described in four "Servant Songs" (see Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:49; 52:13-53:12). God's chosen Servant is not specifically named, but this messianic prophecy is filled with details and descriptions that perfectly match Jesus' sufferings at Calvary for the sins of the world. The depiction of the Servant in Isaiah 53:4-11 identifies Him as the true source of hope for the nation. Vicariously, the Servant took on Himself all the sins and the spiritual anguish of sin (verse 4a). Isaiah used specific language to describe the future ministry of the Servant. Ironically, many who were eyewitnesses to His suffering at Calvary thought He was being justly punished (verse 4b). The reality was that Jesus did bear the judgment that God required to atone for human sin. Isaiah prophesied that the Servant's sufferings would bring peace and healing (verse 5). The Suffering Servant that Isaiah spoke of would perform the ultimate act of love—substitutionary death. His suffering on behalf of others would bring spiritual healing for a lost world whose sins had incurred the wrath of God. Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:9, 23). God's Servant became the scapegoat and object of God's wrath against human sin (verse 6). Like lost sheep, God's people had allowed themselves to be led away from following

God. They rejected God and turned their hearts to wickedness and idolatry. To reconcile humanity to Himself, God would send the Suffering Servant, the Messiah, to pay the price for human sin. The Servant would bear the punishment for human iniquity, and God would punish the Servant as if He had committed every sin in the world. At some point, every living soul has followed Israel's folly by going their own way. The Servant would suffer willingly and humbly, bearing a guilt that did not belong to Him. This is a message of genuine hope for all who have been born in sin and fallen short of God's holiness.

What Do You Think?

How does knowing that Jesus suffered for you affect your level of commitment to Him?

The Suffering Servant's Humiliation

(Isaiah 53:7-9)

KJV

7 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.

8 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.

9 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.

NIV

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

The Suffering Servant willingly submitted His punishment as a sheep being sent to slaughter (verse 7). As the meek Lamb of God, He did not resist, protest, or defend Himself. Rather, Jesus quietly submitted to His tormentors and died a humiliating, painful death for the transgressions (sins) of others as if He were a common criminal (verse 8). Isaiah accurately prophesied that those who crucified Jesus intended to bury Him among the wicked. Instead, He was buried in a rich man's donated tomb (verse 9a). His death by crucifixion was totally undeserved because He had done nothing worthy of this form of execution (verse 9b). He identified with the greatest need of every sinner and willingly submitted to humiliation and death on the Cross as their substitute. Now, there remains hope for the lost, restoration for the backslidden, and the promise of an eternal future in His presence.

What Do You Think?

How do you feel when you reflect on Jesus' intense suffering, humiliation, and death for you?

The Suffering Servant's Triumph

(Isaiah 53:10-11)

KJV

10 Yet it pleased the LORD 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.

11 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.

NIV

10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

11 After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous *servant* will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

The Servant did not deserve to die, but it was the Lord's will that He should be the sin or guilt offering to atone for human sin (verse 10a). Becoming our sin offering required Jesus to willingly lay down His life as the sacrifice for sins (verse 10b). His substitutionary death satisfied the righteous demands of God. Isaiah foretold the Resurrection when he wrote that Jesus' death appeared to be the end of His existence but would "see His offspring," namely those who would become children of God by believing in Him (verse 10c). Additionally, Isaiah prophesied that He would "see the light of life" living on forever as the Son of God. Finally, because of His obedience to the will of God, He was blessed (verse 10d). Our God is the master of orchestrating situations in which defeat is reversed into victory. The suffering and death of the Servant produced life at the moment of His resurrection (verse 11). Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice settled the sin issue once and for all. Through God's own Suffering Servant, His only begotten Son, there is a never-ending hope of justification for all who come to Him by faith. The remnant in exile needed God's message of hope during their time of oppression. God had not forgotten or abandoned His people; He promised to send One who would bear their sins and reconcile them to Himself. In God's timing, the Servant did come in the flesh, suffered, and died to fulfill the penalty for sin. All who believe in Him receive a guarantee of hope for deliverance in the midst of oppression. As we worship and praise God for what He has done, He calls us to share in His sufferings and prepare the way for generations to come.

What Do You Think?

Have you experienced God's turning certain defeat into personal victory for you? Share briefly as time permits.

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Jesus taught that there was no expression of love greater than a man's laying down his life for a friend (see John 15:13). At a time when God's judgment was inevitable and Judah struggled with the memory of military defeat and the burden of extended captivity in Babylon, God sent a word by the prophet Isaiah—a message of hope in the midst of their oppression. Isaiah predicted the coming of the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord who would bring physical and spiritual deliverance and restoration. He would become the sufficient sacrifice to satisfy God's righteous demands.

YOUR LIFE

Who do you know that is struggling with the challenges of life? Share with them the good news that there is a constant living hope in Jesus. He died to provide access to the power, protection, and presence of God for all who trust in Him.

YOUR WORLD!

Our world is troubled with oppression in many forms resulting from sin—persecution, poverty, discrimination, physical abuse, and mental and emotional anguish. Yet, even in the very worst of times, God’s people have the assurance of a present hope and help through Jesus, the Messiah, who willingly became God’s Suffering Servant and gave His life for the sins of the world.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You for sending a Savior to open the door of hope in the midst of sin’s hopelessness and oppression. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION (Preparing for Next Week’s Lesson)

Believers are often challenged to make unpopular decisions when dealing with sinful behaviors in their families or churches. What is the best approach to take? Next week’s lesson will provide an answer to this question.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(April 5-11, 2021)

Ezra: Faith and Action Preacher

MONDAY, April 5: “A Light to Jews and Gentiles” (Acts 26:19-23)

TUESDAY, April 6: “Live the New Life in Christ” (Ephesians 4:17-24)

WEDNESDAY, April 7: “Keep Land Faithful to Godly Practices” (Leviticus 18:24-30)

THURSDAY, April 8: “Ignoring God’s Laws Leads to Judgment” (Zechariah 7:8-14)

FRIDAY, April 9: “People Anxious to Hear the Law” (Nehemiah 7:73b–8:6)

SATURDAY, April 10: “People Respond Actively to the Law” (Nehemiah 8:9-12)

SUNDAY, April 11: “Committed to a Life of Obedience” (Ezra 10:1-12)