

## **A Bible Study Commentary on Isaiah 53**

This Chapter of Isaiah is one of, if not the highest point of all biblical prophecy, from the Christian perspective. The four Gospels and the subsequent 23 epistles of the New Testament give us wonderful insights regarding who Jesus was, what he did, and the purposes of His presence here on earth as both God and Man. His death, resurrection and ascension to heaven as so clearly described in these later books, prove that He conquered death. Then His earthly teachings show us how each of us can be a participant with Him in His resurrection and ascension into the eternal realm. However, as we study this chapter of Isaiah, we find revealed certain elements of this blessed act of redemption that are absent from the New Testament. These I believe, attest to and add unique, as well as, precious insights into how and why God chose this particular means for redeeming mankind, and how much more sacrificial love by the Godhead went into this. That sacrificial love was much much more than any of us can possibly appreciate or comprehend. For an in-depth study regarding that sacrifice, see Christian Musings paper titled “DO YOU REALLY KNOW THE PRICE THAT WAS PAID FOR YOUR SALAVATION?” I pray that this verse-by-verse study and commentary, has been God filtered and is therefore faithful to His Word, as I have sought to understand and to articulate certain aspects that seem to lay beneath the surface of these thirteen verses.

Verse 1: *“Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”*

As we see that this chapter describes Jesus’ suffering on the cross 700 years before it happened, and we realize that it is accurately describing exactly what happened and why, we can begin to understand this verse. Who believed Jesus as He lived out His ministry? Relatively few believed His “report,” that is His Great Truth. While many claimed belief, just as it is today, only a very few truly believed. Who believed God’s revealed power in His Son? The report was the thing heard. It was the Gospel, the fact of the Messiah having come. It was a rhetorical mystery question to all but a very few of the Jews, and even fewer of the gentiles, until much later. *“To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”*

This is asking who has seen and believed the mighty power of the Lord as He has revealed it? In Romans 10:16 Paul quotes from this verse as he speaks to the Jewish leadership and His people. They knew of Messiah's coming and the signs which would verify His presence. They sought fervently for His arrival, and when He did come, they refused to acknowledge Him. That is, they fulfilled the prophecy of this verse, by not believing the "report" and thus rejecting Him. They couldn't see Jesus as the "arm of the Lord stretched out for their salvation, just as most of humanity today also fails to see this. The "arm of the Lord" provides salvation as well as later judgment. Not believing the "report," that is the Gospel, is the hallmark failure of nearly all of humanity, especially today. The "arm of the Lord," that is God's power of both judgment and forgiveness through His Son, is revealed only to the faithful remnant of every age.

*Verse 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 or comeliness: and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him."*

*"for he shall grow up before him"* What does that mean? Who is speaking? Who is "he" And who is him? It seems evident that Father God is speaking. The "he" who shall grow up is Jesus the Man Jesus. The "him" who observes Jesus growing up is the Son of God Spirit, that very special Spirit that dwells Jesus as His Spirit that is attached to His soul, thus giving Him eternal life as both Son of Man and the Son of God.

*"... root out of the dry ground..."* In the context of the time about which Isaiah is prophesying, that is during the life of Jesus the Man, Israel would be under the yoke of Rome, and the religion of the Jews would be mere empty ritual, cold, and full of indifference. This was the dry ground and a faithless condition of the ground in which Jesus, as a "root" was born and struggled to live. To God He was precious. He was the personification of God's love for man. However to man, He was only a weak, worthless little weed fit only to be cut off. This analogy expresses man's view. They portray Him as a lowly undesirable man, rather than who He was. In Isaiah 11:1 we are told *"and there shall come forth a rod out of stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his*

*roots.*” This as we can see is but a paraphrase of our subject verse. Notice the “capital B.” for branch. It was clear to the translators that this was an allusion to Jesus. The next few verses show us that it is about His first coming. Branch, root, stem rod, each are used to express the fact that David is from the line of Jesse, as David was Jesse’s son. In Isaiah 11:10 we find the prophet alluding to Jesus’ second coming when he says “*and in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*” Paul quotes this “root of Jesse” identification of Jesus in Romans 15:12 leaving no doubt as to whom Isaiah was writing about. Finally, in Revelation 5:5 our blessed Lord is spoken of as “the root of David” This brings us back unmistakably to Luke 1:32 and a confirmation that this is the One of whom Gabriel spoke when he told Mary that her son would be given, “*...the throne of His father David.*”

“No form nor comeliness (attractiveness, majesty). Notice it says, “*When we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.*” This description is in the future tense. All of what follows has been written as if the crucifixion has already happened. Of course, at that time He then had no physical beauty. Jesus had been mangled so badly that we are told in Isaiah 52:14 that He was “*so marred more than any man,*” that He probably didn’t even look human! The word “marred” in Hebrew means “corrupted, disfigured.” It’s the only place that this word occurs in Scripture.

But Jesus was the Perfect Man, in body, soul and spirit. The Son of God, the Lamb of God! How could He be otherwise? The law required that the sacrificial lamb to be without blemish. Would God provide His Lamb to be anything less? This was the Lamb that would take away the sins of the entire world once and for all. It had to be perfect, and He was perfect in everyway, body, mind, soul and spirit! The common belief is that the affective slaughter of that perfect lamb began with the initial beating that disfigured Him, and ended on the cross. I submit that His torture, while not resulting in any physical disfigurement began when He was a child and suffered throughout His early years from the abuse of those who condemned Him because of their belief that he was the illegitimate offspring of an unfaithful spouse.

Notice He now has no beauty, not that He never did. His perfect of body, mind, soul and spirit made Him very distinct. That had to have contributed to the reason why He suffered throughout His childhood and ministerial life. The world cannot stand such perfection, and it doubts its authenticity. It worships physical beauty, of the Hollywood-type. He probably didn't have that type of look, but instead had regular well-formed average features of a pleasing looking man, but one also expressing an in-ordinate amount of kindness, honesty, and compassion, and probably exuding some of His internal holy radiance. The radiance of His soul and spirit would have offended the world. Seekers were drawn to Him because of it, while others saw it as unreal. Those of the ruling class who believed they already knew God, and thought they were already fully blessed, saw Him as a disturbance to the society over which they had power and prestige. His teaching was contrary to all they believed or wanted to hear. It threatened the whole religious structure as well as the social/political stability.

Let's never believe that He was other than beautiful and perfect until sinful, unrepentant, hate-filled man was persuaded to try to destroy Him, a process. When His appointed time came, He accepted it without resistance, and was in fact, a matter of His own instigation. It was the fulfillment of God's plan out of His love for us. He, Himself within the eternal Godhead ordained this as the only way for us to become free of our sins and to ever be able to join Him in eternity. Psalm 45 speaks clearly of Jesus in verse 2 where the Holy Spirit tells us "*...Thou art fairer than the children of men...*" If the Holy Spirit says He was beautiful, who can doubt it?

Verse 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.*"

"Despised and Rejected..." Carnal, sinful man cannot stand a perfect goodness in his presence. You try living in this world and being immersed in it, as he was in order to carry out His mission. Enter the drug, alcohol, sex, continuous entertainment, and

money-worshipping culture, and refuse to participate, and you will soon be seriously shunned and rejected. Now, go further, and preach repentance and salvation, and watch the level of despising and rejection rise to dangerous heights as it was with Him, as demonstrated by the many times they sought to stone Him. If anything man's nature has changed, and it has most certainly been for the worse.

How could Jesus be anything but a man of sorrows and grief, as He saw that so much of humanity would reject and hate Him, hating all He stood for? These were the very ones to whom He came to deliver His message of love and salvation, those for whom He came purposefully to suffer and die that they might live. Jesus had suffered all His life for being who He was and what He preached. He knew exactly what the nature of His death would be, and what suffering, physical and spiritual, He must endure. During His last hours, He sweat blood in the anticipation of that ordeal, not so much regarding what man would do, but what the Father must do. Don't we, for other reasons, in our comparatively puny ways, share His grief as we see the tragedy of the whole world unfold, and the unsaved condition of our loved ones? We should have joy in our hearts because of the knowledge of our own salvation. Nevertheless there cannot help but exist in every saved soul much of grief and sorrow for others, who are unsaved.

Verse 4: *“Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”*

Examining this verse 4 literally, we learn that *“He hath borne our griefs.”* This might be stated this way:

He has taken the (maladies, diseases, griefs) that belong to us and placed them upon Himself, thus through giving us the strength to continue on. 1 Peter 2:24 paraphrases the last part of verse 4 when he observes that it was Jesus *“Who His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...”*

As already noted, He carried our griefs and sorrows as well as our terrible destiny in His heart, but those around Him couldn't care less. Esteem as used here is defined as “to plot

or contrive, usually in a malicious sense.” Paraphrasing this: “we did contrive against Him who was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.” That is a heavy load of damnation placed on our blessed Lord by God Himself! Notice how emphatic this is. As we read further, we are told this four times!

1. “He was smitten by God and afflicted” (verse 4)
2. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Verse 6)
3. “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” (Verse 10)
4. “He hath put Him to grief.” (Verse 10)

Doesn't it bother you that it was God Himself, the loving Father, who did these terrible things to His only begotten, absolutely perfect, and blameless Son? How can we understand such a thing coming from our loving, and just Creator God? It's His love, for us and His impeccable justice that provides the answer.

Jesus was sinless, yet God made Him the offering for sin, by placing on Him the entire accumulated sins of the world, and to suffer the ultimate of all possible suffering as the punishment for bearing them. To even begin to understand this, we must recall that this event was planned from the beginning of time. The Triune Godhead, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit declared that this was the only way that the inevitable accumulation of iniquities of each of all mankind could be dealt with in the spiritual realm. God, by His permissive will, allowed sin to pollute the human soul, and only God, by His directive will could, and would provide the remedy, or else, because of His divine justice, the entire creation would have to perish.

The principal purpose of the plan was to create a race of beings in His likeness with which to populate the eternal realm as His family. He chose to create Adam and Eve, through which the race would propagate to the fullness of His plan. Heaven however is a place of love and obedience to the Creator God. Nothing can exist there in any manner other than in love, and absolute sin-free obedience. This love and obedience that God requires of those who would be part of His family has to be voluntary.

For there to be love, there must be choice. Without choice, man would be no different than a machine, programmed to operate only as specifically constructed and instructed. As God knew, if He expected absolute obedience from His created beings, He would have made man in the image and likeness of a machine, instead of Himself. However, the result would not have been the kind of obedience He wanted from His family of man. It would have been strict programming of a mechanical form of obedience. God had already made all of inanimate creation somewhat this way, that is incapable of choice, but instead only capable of absolute adherence to immutable laws where choice is completely absent. To have genuine obedience and love, every human being qualified for heavenly residence, must have had the choice to obey or to not obey, to love God or not to love Him, and to have then made that free-will choice of uncompromising obedience and love.

The angels at the beginning were given that choice, and Scripture tells us that a third of them chose to disobey, and therefore had to leave that blessed place in which they dwelt. What a strange and powerful inducement Satan must have offered in order to cause such a defection. As we know, that choice came but once. Those who remained were fully committed, and would have no desire to ever leave. Those who fell could not come back even if they had regrets because of having departed.

Of course we know from reading Genesis that Adam was the first on the path of disobedience, and through him all of humanity inherited that genetic defect of irresistible disobedience to God's way. God knew this would happen, and that it should not be prevented if His divine purpose was to be achieved. He also knew exactly how He would have to deal with it. That gene of disobedience became so powerful, so all pervasive, as He knew it would, that all mankind would be helpless, to go against it, and therefore He alone would have to affect a cure. Man has no strength to effectually resist sin, and rarely even has any genuine sustainable desire to do so. Self inflicted pain and suffering, self-deprecation or denial, prayer, confession, or even the most successfully implemented vows of obedience cannot prevent future disobedience, or remove any of the disqualifying stains of past infractions.

Again, God knew all of this from the very beginning and wove into His plan the One and only remedy. He authored a book we call the Holy Bible in which He laid out His whole plan from its inception at creation to the very end, when all His family will finally join Him in His eternal home on the new earth which He will create after the millennium. This solution to the disobedience issue is well described in this Book. However, it involves a genuine belief in the authenticity of His Authorship and a willingness to truly try to understand His plan. But even before this can happen, one must come to the realization that sinfulness reigns, and that only a Savior having supernatural authority can save one from just condemnation. Then there must be a genuine trust in His promise and in the manner in which He is willing to permanently remove the condemning effects of that propensity for disobedience. As a result of this, the gates of Heaven will open for all who sincerely accept His offer of salvation. Many of our sins are enjoyable such those involving illicit sex and thievery. Others we feel are necessary because of the predicaments we get ourselves into from which we see no other escape except to lie, murder and other forms of savagery. Satan, the author of sin, is a master of providing every kind of temptation. Most are “sugar coated” so as to not appear to be sins.

That finally brings us to the plan itself where God reveals most explicitly the exact remedy, and how He implements it for all who are willing to make their choice of acceptance. Refusing the offer is still an option, because God has never removed man’s free will. However, His Book makes it very clear to all who choose to both study and seek to understand it, exactly what the consequences of a refusal to accept the remedy will be. It was God’s remedy, that His own suffering and the suffering death and resurrection of Jesus would be the means by which sins would be removed from human souls. This would open the heavenly gates for all who effectually believe on Jesus. This was the principal purpose of all of God’s wondrous efforts, even eclipsing His act of creation. We have here in this 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah, God’s revelation of some of the details as to how this incredible plan would be implemented, details of which are found only here. It predicts that Jesus would be caused to suffer at the hands of both man and God, that He would die as a sacrificial lamb that would forever clean away all sins of



those who believed in Him, and that He would then physically live again to see the fruit of His work.

*Verse 5: "But He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we were healed."*

He was wounded (stained, profaned, broke, defiled, polluted) he was bruised (crushed, crumbled, beat to pieces, broke to pieces, destroyed, humbled, oppressed, smitted) not for transgressions of human laws, but the law of God that no one could keep. Isaiah is really declaring that he bore the guilt of the sins. He bore the penalty that was rightly ours. If this was to have meaning as a vicarious punishment, the Servant Himself had to be utterly free of transgressions (sin) or else His punishment could be of no avail. If one himself was sinful, and bore the sins of another, this would be a travesty of God's justice, for the sin bearer in this case would have need that his own sins be borne by another.

Please consider this clumsy but perhaps useful analogy. Supposing your counter-top is covered with grease. It needs cleaning, and therefore you are obliged to clean it. Can you clean it with a cloth that is also covered in grease? Using a greasy cloth, no matter how hard you try, or how many of such cloths you use, the counter will never become clean. Perhaps it could be covered over for a while, until guests left, but then a clean cloth would have to be used if that filth were ever to be removed. By the same token, how can anyone expect that a sin-covered soul or any number of them could ever clean any other soul? I liken this to the effectiveness of the effort of the men who tortured Him and caused His physical death. It took a clean soul, the only clean soul that ever lived, to be capable of cleaning sin-covered souls. For such a job, it had to be not only perfectly clean, but also sufficiently large and powerful. What the old dispensation provided by the shedding and sprinkling of blood, was the temporary covering of the sins until that One and Only perfectly clean Soul-Spirit, the God-man Jesus, would come. Only He could, and did actually remove all of man's sins, the sins of those who truly accept Him as Lord and Savior.

“Chastisement of our peace” that is, the chastisement that procured our peace was upon Him. NIV: “The punishment that brought us the peace. (NASAB “well being.” By the word peace we are to understand the peace that God maintains toward men. Scholars conclude here that “peace stands as an individualizing designation of salvation. In the world of contention, peace is one of the highest blessings” (Hengstenberg) Those things that once stood as barriers between God and ourselves have been removed, and we now can be in a right relationship with Him. We can paraphrase this by saying: “Because of our sins, God was not at peace with us, if He wanted to be at peace with us there must be a chastisement, but it fell not on us, but upon the Servant.” This is the peace of God. It is another peace that passeth understanding.

*“With His stripes, we are healed.”* Dave Hunt makes an accurate and very enlightening point. It is that a careful examination indicates that in the original Hebrew, it is “stripe” singular. It speaks of but one stripe, the one that the Father inflicted on His Son. This makes sense and adds a profound insight and deeper understanding of what really happened on the cross. Jumping ahead to verse 10 we find that “it please the Lord to bruise Him.” This certainly goes with the singular of “stripes.”

Let’s think about this! The very first sin, just one sin, began the process of destruction of the entire universe. Entropy came into being, and the first death occurred, as God killed an animal so as to use the skin to cover their sinful bodies. Notice that this covering provided no redemption of their sinful souls. Thus the death of every earthly creature ever to live became inevitable; the earth began to groan, and will continue to do so to the end. Sin grew and spread as an incurable virus over the whole earth in the heart of every man and woman that would ever live on this earth.

We should recognize that there is but one sin, and that is disobedience to God’s will. Each and every wrong which is considered sin, is exactly that, disobedience to God’s will. That singular first sin by Adam continues as an infection in every soul, and is manifesting in every conceivable way. There has been, and continues to be, an inestimable amount of human pain, sickness and suffering as a result of this worst of all

afflictions. We have here in this chapter, and in this verse, the answer as to how God was to deal with the spiritual consequences of sin. “With His stripe we are healed.” Whose stripe (wound, hurt, bruise)? It’s by God the Father’s wounding of His Son that we are healed. Healed how? Healed of the judgment of sin through this substitutionary punishment! Notice it’s not God’s stripe, and also those inflicted by man. This was strictly a God-to-God, Father-to-Son punishment. The stripes inflicted by man were but expressions of his hatred of God and contributed nothing to the providing of salvation.

Let’s continue to muse on this fact. This was not about the incredible beating, the humiliation, the physical torture, of the very worst that the vilest of hatred that mankind could conceive of inflicting on this totally innocent Man. It was not this that in any way provided the means by which all mankind could be judged free from the deserved punishment for his own sins. That was just a “warm up” to the main event, merely the expression of man’s rejection and natural hatred of God. This rejection of God was clearly manifested by the attitudes and actions of the Pharisees and Sanhedrin toward Jesus. The Old Testament, their Tenach, spelled out for them in detail the precise means of identifying and recognizing the Messiah when He would come. If they knew anything, they knew this Book. They knew all of the identifying characteristics of the true Messiah, and therefore many had to have known that Jesus was the One, because He fulfilled every requirement exactly as it was written, as well as over 300 prophecies that attested to His unique qualifications.

When the people, who had far less Scriptural knowledge, saw that Jesus had passed these tests, many were alerted to the truth, that the Messiah had indeed come. (Matthew 12:22). However, the ruling Sanhedrin closed their eyes to this undeniable truth and declared to the people that He was a false Messiah whose power to fulfill prophecy was in fact derived from Satan (Matthew 12:24). In speaking these lies, they hypocritically betrayed their carnal nature and their lack of integrity. However, to be fair, this amount of vilification maybe the unwarranted. For centuries they had believed that 2 Messiahs would come. They didn’t understand that it would be but one Messiah who would come twice. Given that their people were under the yoke of Rome, they were convinced that the

first one would come as the conquering king, and liberate them. It was evident that the humble Jesus was not Him. Therefore, while they recognized that His miracles confirmed His Messiahship, they reasoned that they must have come from Satan, the powerful imitator. They feared that because the people were acknowledging Jesus' deity, it would cause a revolt against Roman authority and bring the might of Rome down on the whole nation, destroying their comfortable lives, and the prestige they valued so greatly. As far as their salvation, they bragged they were the children of Abraham, and therefore they believed that they already had eternal life. So what could this "meek little guy" do except stir up trouble. Jesus surely wasn't going to rid them of Rome by turning the other cheek. If He couldn't do that, He had to be eliminated. So they sought to be rid of this threat by having Him killed (John 11:49, 50).

If we muse and pray, and let the Holy Spirit lead us, we can readily come to the realization that man, no matter what he might do, even to our Lord God Jesus, could not purge or even be the vehicle through which even the tiniest sin could be removed. This was God the Father, punishing God the Son in the most painful way, with the worst of all punishment that God Himself could ever conceive. Nothing less, in accordance with His divine nature was adequate punishment to allow for the redemption of mankind. Is it possible to conceive of a love so great that God, the Creator would subject Himself to such suffering for the sake of such worthless insignificant and despicable failures like us? Logically no, but when we come to realize what that event achieved, how, as a result, it became possible to restore some portion of mankind to a state acceptable for adoption into His family, it should all make sense.

What could be that horrible? What could be so much worse than what man had already done to Him? Jesus summarized it all on the cross, if we will but let it sink in, in all of its ghastly horror. "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?" He even predicted that He would say this through David in Psalms 22, 1000 years before He, Jesus the Man was born. This event was planned at the very inception of creation. The dread of it may have been on our Lord's mind from its inception, and became most highly focused in that

manner when He perhaps pre-lived that moment in His mind as He directed David's pen to write this Psalm.

In order to elaborate on that answer, let's make note of some things that Jesus said about Himself and His Father. In John 10:3 He said, "*I and my Father are one.*" In John 10:38 we read, "*The Father is in Me and I in Him.*" From John 14:9 we hear Jesus say, "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*" Could it be more plainly or strongly stated?

The Triune Godhead is one God; the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God; each is fully one God; collectively they are one God. They are inseparable; they are one. The spiritual entity never separated nor could separate even through the Son "*Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God..... and took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.*" (Philippians 2:6-7) Becoming the son of Man did not break that immutable spiritual bond of oneness. But on the cross, something unique and terrible happened. When He cried out this tremendous "Why", He knew why, but the agony was far, far more than His humanness or even His Godness could stand. For some portion of those three hours from noon to three PM when total darkness fell, the earth quaked, and the temple veil was ripped, I'm persuaded that God the Father, in a sense, also ripped Him out, that is separated Him from within the Godhead!

Having been made sin, that fatal spiritual defect as Scripture tells us, His presence within the Godhead, or any heavenly place was impossible. It was intolerable to God. This tearing away, this separation of the inseparable, those who were one, an indivisible one, were, for a few moments on the cross, set apart. The agony of this, for both the Father and the Son, as well as the Holy Spirit is infinitely beyond our imagination. His perfect justice, which required the most severe of all punishments, greater than any human soul could provide, was the only sufficient punishment. It was because of His perfect love for fallen man. This led to the only possible solution, that is, a punishment that the spiritual Godhead would suffer "collectively," and that our blessed Lord Christ Jesus would also suffer physically, as the Son of Man.

Verse 10 says, *“It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.”* How could it please the Lord to do this to His Son, that is to bruise, to break Him to pieces? How could it please God the Father to do this to His Son, when in Matthew 3:17 God the Father spoke saying *“...this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”* In order to understand, we must apply these seemingly conflicting messages, to John 3:16 where we learn *“That God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have ever lasting life.”* The word “gave” “didomi” in the Greek can also mean, “bestowed, committed, suffered, and yielded”. In causing Him to become Man, He did all that each of these alternative definitions of “gave” conveyed. All that we read here, all of the natural and supernatural suffering by God, was out of love for us who are of the world, even those of the most sinful nature, who are willing to receive Him.

Here now we see all the dots finally connecting and the grand purpose revealed. The whole of Isaiah 53 simply provides some of the details of the manner in which God’s justice, tempered, but not compromised by that love for the world, was chosen to be played out. Of course, because we know and believe the New Testament Gospel, we can look back to this chapter, already knowing the surficial aspects of this prophecy. It is only here in Isaiah are the deeper aspects revealed. But why did it have to be this way? Why not in so many other ways that need not have required God Himself to suffer so horribly? Obviously this was the only way, because it was God’s ordained way, and our lack of full understanding does nothing to diminish its necessity and perfect appropriateness. We must fully accept and respect this, because we know that His ways are perfect. Our most elevated actions, thoughts and powers of reasoning are nothing in comparison.

Now let’s look at this divine decision from another perspective not often considered. As mentioned earlier hereinabove, it was God’s permissive will that allowed sin to enter the world. Because of His omniscience, He knew from before creation what would happen, that man would choose disobedience rather than obedience, as He also knew every detail of everyone’s life who would ever be born. Therefore, He knew in advance every difficulty and every bit of pain and suffering that this permitted freedom of choice would

cause, both to Him and to all of humanity. He also knew in His infinite wisdom that to allow this was the only way that He could obtain a genuinely loving, sinless, eternal human family. Because He is a just God who cannot tolerate sin, and will not allow it into heaven, His became the task of eliminating the condemning power of sin from the souls of those who were willing to accept His one and only one method for doing so. Certainly it was His desire, out of love for His creation, to offer a way by which everyone could be saved.

However, it could only be given to those who would return His love, and repent to obedience. Only those would have this blemish removed qualify for a heavenly residence. Therefore, can we not reason that this infinitely just God also felt an obligation to fallen man for having permitted the circumstances that made possible the fall in the first place? Isn't it possible that God's perfect sense of justice included recognition that He had a degree, of responsibility, for having permitted disobedience to pollute His creation? Recognizing this, may we reason without doing violence to Scripture or misrepresenting Him, that He Himself, in carrying out His perfect justice, deemed it necessary that He Himself accept the spiritual punishment that His justice demanded?

From a human perspective, if I deliberately arranged a situation through which I'm certain will cause someone else to be tempted to commit a crime, and that crime happens, should I not consider myself at least, on a conscience basis, to have had some involvement in that crime? This may also have been on God's mind when He chose this substitutionary means of providing justification, and thereby salvation for mankind. It is not even remotely possible that there was any other way to remove sin. Scripture makes that very clear. I only mention this, because God's justice is so all encompassing and perfect that He may have even chosen to judge Himself. While, God did all the suffering required to clean the human soul, man's earthly suffering is necessitated as the earthly consequences of his willful sins and the sins of others. The following will summarize the points I've been persuaded to articulate:

1. God through His permissive will allowed disobedience, that is sin to enter the world.
2. Regardless of the pain, suffering and inevitable physical death that has resulted, He deemed this, although tragic, an unavoidable consequence of the process by which He could prepare an eternal family. Having consistently chosen sin over obedience, it is man, not God, who is responsible for his wrong choices, and for all of the painful earthly consequences those choices cause
3. Consistent with His self-imposed responsibility, and in accordance with His sense of divine justice, God may have deemed it appropriate that He Himself suffer the spiritual consequences of that which He had allowed. We could talk all day about the incredible love, for His creation as well as His perfect sense of justice that could have caused Him to suffer a higher level of suffering while Jesus was on the cross. His suffering is well established through Isaiah, and His love expressed throughout His blessed Word. I expect that many will rail against this interpretation, and perhaps rightly so. However, God did in fact choose to be the One who would do the suffering as payment for the sins of the world. If we examine His perfect “sense” of justice this idea is not without some merit.
4. From the human perspective one might say man has been offered the way to get off “scott-free” in terms of eternal consequences of his sins. There are however, as noted, always earthly, that is physical and emotional consequences of our own sins, as well as of the accumulated sins of all of humanity, that we must all suffer. This by no means is an easy pain-free walk through life, but for the saved, these difficulties end upon physical death. For the unsaved, they really commence in earnest at death, and last forever. From the spiritual perspective, man’s only obligation in this whole matter is to accept God’s grace of salvation through faith, that Jesus’ work on the cross did indeed do all God said it did, namely wash away their sins and therefore purchase their tickets to heaven.



To those who have accepted this remedy it may seem like a ridiculously simple and wonderful free gift. However, those who own this gift have not only accepted the earthly sin-caused suffering, but must also accept the additional suffering Jesus said would come because of their faith in Him. Their lives will also include grieving and lamenting for the unsaved, but also to seek, as the Holy Spirit guides them, to communicate the truth to unbelievers so that they too might be saved.

Again, many will be offended by the idea that God took some responsibilities for man's fall. I suspect that they are correct. I made this observation because it came as I pondered God's incredible plan together with His perfect justice.

*Verse 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."*

Everyone sins; we love our sins; and like dumb sheep, we wander and stray from obedience to God's will, to instead do what is right and pleasing in our own eyes. However, God has laid on His Servant, the perfectly innocent Jesus, the consequential spiritual punishment of this entire worldwide accumulation of sin, as if it had been His own. With God's wrath applied, and His justice satisfied, God could now attribute, and distribute, Christ's righteousness to all who would choose to believe in Him, and the atonement that He provided on the cross.

*Verse 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."*

This is the verse that was being read by the Ethiopian Eunuch when Philip met him on his way back to Ethiopia, after the crucifixion (Acts 8:32, 33). As we have seen, the Father Lord was the ultimate Inflictor of the Servant's suffering. It was the only affectual suffering for the remission of sins. This verse speaks of the Servant Jesus enduring man inflicting of suffering with patience and silent resolve. For as we have seen, the only

significant “stripe,” was the stripe the Father inflicted. That spiritual pain of separation, occurred near the end of His ordeal on the cross. One could say, He suffered Himself to be afflicted in that He allowed, in fact volunteered, to so suffer. He opened not His mouth, that is, He offered no audible evidence of suffering, no defense, no excuse, and no expression of resentment or anger against man for the totally unwarranted punishment with which He was being physically inflicted. In fact, He prayed to the Father from the cross that He forgives them because they didn’t know what they were doing. Isaiah mentioned this clause, not just in passing, but to empathize the supernatural behavior of Jesus.

Verse 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.”*

Here God is again expressing in the past tense what was not to physically happen for yet another 700 years. In the eternal realm in which God dwells, past, present and future merge into a structure where time seems irrelevant. Because this was all planned out by the Triune Godhead, which of course includes the Son Himself who would merge in spirit with Jesus. Thus the prophet can speak in all three tenses about the same event. In verse 2 for instance it’s *“...He shall grow up and then...”* (The future tense) *“...He has no form nor comeliness...”* and *“...He is despised...”* (The present tense), and *“He was wounded for our transgressions...”* (The past tense). He was imprisoned and was judged a total of six times by the Sanhedrin and by the Romans before being sentenced to hang from the tree. *“He was taken...”* and *“...He was cut off from the land of the living.”* The phrase, *“...and who will declare His generation?”* Can be interpreted as, “who among His contemporaries, or even their posterity, has or will consider, or think deeply about, the significance of this event?”

Then we are again told why He was stricken “killed”. It was because of mankind’s sins. This by itself is hardly an answer that provides any depth of understanding. To the world, the whole thing is ludicrous, absurd and foolish. The redeemed believing soul

accepts this on faith based on many related evidences that attest most convincingly to its truth.

One's faith, must never be a blind faith. Blind faith, is no faith because it has no foundation or basis for belief. For how can such a faith ever be certain of itself, and therefore not be easily manipulated by false teachers and by the world. Such manipulation is evidenced today in many "Christian" churches. There is no need for anyone to have a blind or weak faith in this or any other matter regarding Jesus, or what any of this is all about. All necessary proof and everything essential for our understanding is fully provided in Scripture, if we will only seek it diligently under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and not let others do our thinking.

*Verse 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."*

What hating-man wanted to give Jesus was a dishonorable and disgraceful burial with the wicked, but here God tells us that it would be otherwise, that is it would be honorable, and that it would be in a fine grave where the rich were buried. Of course, this is just what actually happened 700 years later. He was given a royal man's burial after a criminal's death.

Matthew 27:57-60, Mark 15: 42-46, Luke 23:50-53, John 19:38-40 and 1Peter 2:22 attest to the fulfillment of that prophecy. Man's intention was for His grave to be with the wicked. This would have been to toss His body out to be devoured by vultures or jackals, or burned in the City dump that was in the Hinnom valley south of the city. However, as this verse implies, God wouldn't allow it. Had this been the fate of His body, how could the events that followed have taken place? In His death we see, as written in the Gospels, that his body was taken by a rich disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, to his own brand new tomb.(Matthew 27:57)

Only in this manner could His body have been securely guarded, and later discovered to have supernaturally disappeared, as the Gospels clearly relate. God's plan, on our behalf demanded an alternate sequence of circumstances and events that would evidence the fact that the Lord had risen. The subsequent existence of the well-secured yet empty tomb is an important part of that evidence. This verse gives the basics of God's plan for dealing with Jesus' body. The Gospels describe it in detail. There is a most important message that no reading of verse 10 can possibly reveal unless one has studied carefully. His activities during His 40 days here after the resurrection. How could His body vacate the tomb without it having been opened? It was the same way that Jesus appeared to the 11 Apostles in the secured room. First He was not, then he was there in the His flesh and bones body. Then again He wasn't there. For a detailed analysis, see the Christian Musings study called "Do you really know the price of you Salvation?"

Verse 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."*

Here is that verse again where we find that despite His innocence, it pleased the Lord to participate in, if not, be responsible for what befell Jesus. While man's guilt in the carrying out of this event was in no way excusable, or made less horrible, they could only do what God allowed them to do. Therefore, His death was not really in the hands of man. It was an integral part of the Godhead's fore-ordained plan. Since the Son was a participant in orchestrating His own death, He Himself chose the time, the place, and the manner of His sacrificial act. Several times, such as in John 7:6 He acknowledged His choosing of the time when He said, "...my time is not yet come..." He chose the place when He directed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah, the location where 1500 years later He would submit Himself to be sacrificed. And as noted earlier, in Psalms 22, He described through David, 1000 years before His crucifixion, the exact manner of death.

The pleasure, that the Lord had in mind when He chose to write this, was to reveal to us that it was His will that He suffered His “Servant” so as to accomplish the divine will. This was His way, and therefore was the only possible way for sinful man to escape the spiritual punishment for his sins. The Lord’s pleasure was not a matter of pleasantry as we commonly use the word. In taking pleasure in the servant’s bruising, it may be better understood as “something the Lord desired as a valuable thing for His purpose” (See Strong’s) “He had put Him to grief.” That made it very painful. In the King James Version, it says, “... *when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.*” The thou is a key word but also confusing. This gains some clarity in a footnote that says “*or when his soul shall make an offering.*” The NIV says “*and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering.*” The NLT says, “*Yet when his life is made an offering for sin.*” The NASV translates this as “*if He would render Himself as a guilt offering.*” Again, it’s the “thou” (you) in the KJV that makes this verse make sense. These faulty translations remove the thou rendering their translation ludicrous. Who is you, and who is speaking? This is why I have faith only in the KJV! Regarding this verse, the others fail to connote the true meaning. It’s only the “thou” that can answer the question. The answer is found in Isaiah 52:1 where we find God is clearly speaking to Zion, that is, to the Jews! When we continue reading the rest of Chapter 52 and on through Chapter 53, there is no change of speaker right through to the thou. Thus God, through Isaiah, is speaking to the Jews.

Although, the Lord brings about the death of the Servant, He is not the offeror of the sacrifice. Jumping to verse 12 we find that the Servant receives the reward for His work, which indicates that it is He Himself who offers the sacrifice for which He is then rewarded. His soul is not a mere substitution for Himself, but shows that His very life is to be an oblation. The prophet speaks of the soul as performing what is in reality done upon it, yet actually it is the spirit that is offered. Perhaps to put it this way may remove the confusion. “When thou (Jesus, Son of God) shalt make his (Jesus, Son of man), his soul an offering of sin.” Here is another somewhat subtle allusion to God having caused the only relevant punishment, and not man. Man can only suffer the body, not the soul. Notice that it is the soul that receives the affectual punishment, not the body.

The soul having completed the sin offering, the Passover Lamb can now see His seed that is the result of this sacrifice. This speaks of those whom, by His vicarious suffering and sacrifice, He has saved man from the guilt and the power of sin. These are His seed. Notice that in seeing His seed we are therefore told of His resurrection, or else how could He see, having died? To prolong His days as presented here, is to live eternally, because we know that this is Jesus.

By the Servant's hand, that is His suffering, death, and resurrection, the thing that the Lord had needed to do so that sinners should be redeemed and justified. Through His suffering the Servant accomplished all the Father asked of Him. God repeatedly refers to Jesus as His Servant. However, because Jesus the Man having as His spirit the Son of the Godhead, He and the Father are equal. If they are equal how can one be a servant to the other? I believe that this is the application of the Great Kenosis whereby Jesus put aside many of His Godly powers and humbling Himself to the position of Servant throughout His earthly life.

Verse 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.”*

The Servant's suffering will yield Him great satisfaction. The Servant will see with great satisfaction, that His suffering will be fruitful. *“By His knowledge my righteous Servant shall justify many.”* It makes most sense if this knowledge of the Servant is shared with others, those who are saved by Him, a knowledge based on faith in the Messiah's righteousness. Thus we see that many are saved due to the fact that the Servant had borne their iniquities.

Verse 12: *“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.”*

The Servant was victorious, and so He is given His portion of the spoils along with the strong and the great. These are the spiritual seeds of verse 10, the saved souls. The strong and great are perhaps those who brought many crowns to His feet, for who else of man can be so described in the eternal kingdom? There are no “strong or great” on this earth who can carry those earthly qualities to heaven or to hell. One’s spiritual advancement is in the on-going sanctification process here on earth, and its conversion into spiritual crowns, are all any can bring with them.

That is the end of this verse- by- verse commentary. However, because of the profoundly revealing nature, and depth of this prophecy, I am persuaded, in the hope of greater clarity and completeness of thought, to repeat and expand on certain aspects of what I believe this chapter tells us.

First, Jesus’ persecution, suffering and death were not the great tragedy many believe it to have been. We should recognize clearly that it was a profound achievement, an achievement eclipsing even the creation. It was the living out of a divine plan, orchestrated before creation. Also in this study are presented two observations that because they may not have been observed before, may seem strange, and therefore perhaps controversial and not biblical. I don’t believe I have, and I pray that I never will knowingly speak or write anything contrary to the truth of God, as revealed in Scripture. The Holy Bible is His inerrant truth and I know it to be entirely of His authorship, and must not be altered in any way. With this ever in mind and again with reference to verse 5, where it is written, “*by his stripes we are healed,*” it was, as the Greek indicates, by only one particular stripe, the stripe that God Himself inflicted, that has allowed for the saving of our souls from the spiritual punishment our sins deserve. This supernatural “stripe”, this affliction by God Himself, is the one and only punishment for our sins that brought about our justification. Nothing man did, or could ever do to Him was sufficient to clean away sins.

Think about it. Don’t let that profound statement go under appreciated, “by His stripe we are healed.” How are we healed? By what means did God provide for our sins to be

forgiven? By His stripe! By His unilateral act of punishment! It doesn't say by His stripe and afflictions caused by man, or by any other agency. It was by His action and His alone that we are healed! We must always take Scripture literally unless the context clearly directs us otherwise. Here He expresses the fact in four different ways so as to be sure we get it. Furthermore, sin being strictly a spiritual, not a physical sickness, (although it sometimes seems to manifest in other ways) only a supernatural solution to the problem could suffice.

Notice how carefully the whole of the events is described. Nowhere is there any suggestion that man was the agent of the sin removal. This false conclusion is fostered by the plural "stripes" which seems to indicate man's participation on the matter. Most are under the impression that the horrible hate-filled physical and emotional abuse He suffered at the hands of man had to have been enough, and that it seemed to be all that was needed as the solution to the sin problem. This is because God's direct involvement is not well evidenced in the New Testament Gospels. The whole earthly aspect of the event is carefully described, yet strikingly absent of this added layer of revelation that is provided here in Isaiah. Also, I believe that even after reading this prophecy, few seem to be aware of how important and uniquely revealing this chapter 53 is in providing this essential fact.

However, we should also realize, if we think about it in the context of the whole Scripture, and understand that sin is a spiritual blemish on the spiritual aspect of one's being, and that no amount of physical or mental torture directly or vicariously could cleanse a corrupt soul/spirit to rid it of its sin, much less provide the way for all of the sins of the world to be forgiven. If this were possible, then man himself would be capable of fashioning some form of painful works effort by which he could rid himself of his own sins, and perhaps the sins of others. If this were true, and much of the world believes it is, through the many Satan composed false religions, than Jesus' suffering and death would have been unnecessary. It would have been highly foolish to have even been allowed, let alone orchestrated by God. How horribly and tragically sad it is that so much of the world actually ascribes to some variation of this false works effort premise.



God the Father wasn't simply sitting in heaven waiting out this process so that He could get on with dispensing grace to all the souls who would accept what Jesus did for them. Some who appear to believe this have fashioned an acronym out of the word GRACE as God's Reward At Christ's Expense. That is cute and clever, but it hardly fits the facts. As Jesus, the Son of God Suffered, so by the very nature of the Godhead, there had to have been a common spiritual suffering by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit! To Jesus was added the additional physical suffering for reasons I believe may have been for achieving an additional benefit to all redeemed souls beyond the spiritual issue of sin. However, even from the simpler-to-understand perspective of a Father seeing His Son suffer physical torture and then a horrible death, the Father's grief would be unbearable even though He knew the final outcome.

Add to this, the fact that both the Father and Son had the power to stop the whole thing anytime they chose, but wouldn't, you have an expression of God's "supernatural self-discipline," and willingness to suffer the ultimate pain. These combine to reveal to us an even more powerful expression of "Their" love for Their creation. By this alone we are made aware of the incredible magnitude of God's commitment to this as the only way to redeem any of His creation. As already noted, it was only by the tearing apart, the "impossible" separation of the Son from the Father that produced the sufficient sacrifice to remove sin.

Through this wonderful prophecy given to Isaiah, we are able to more fully understand what God had to do to eradicate the penalty of sin. Through the implicit, as well as the explicit knowledge, I believe that we can find in this prophecy another level of understanding. It reveals how very much love and suffering was caused not only to Jesus, but the entire Godhead. Let us muse on this for a while. If it doesn't drag you to your knees in tearful prayer and gratitude, then I have failed in my articulation of the circumstances, or else you haven't mused deeply enough.

What do I believe we should conclude from all of this? Looking at the whole Bible as the context for this incredible chapter of Isaiah, what is it that we may conclude as God's purpose, and His procedure in achieving it? The answer begins in Genesis 1:26 "*And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness...*" In the next verse, God amplifies His statement when He says "*So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*" Thus He gave male and female equality as to being "in His image." This equality is further expressed in verse 28 where it says, "*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it...*" This is clearly a joint venture of equals. I've strayed here for a moment from the thrust of what I'm persuaded to say about God's purpose to point out what is often missed as the absolute equality of man and woman in being made in God's image and also as to the importance of both of their combined roles in this world.

Again what was God's purpose in creating mankind in His own image? There is only one answer in my opinion. As alluded to previously, it was simply to provide for himself an eternal family which of course, was "in His likeness." Everything in Scripture from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22 can be summarized as the history of the process God chose to make for Himself that eternal family. Those who accept and dedicate their lives to a genuine faith in the One through whom His purpose can be affected, become members of that blessed family. In this context, Isaiah 53 becomes simply an awesomely accurate preview of that incredible act of love and self sacrifice God made for the restoration to His image in those who would become His family.

Before we leave this most precious of our Lord's revelation, let us pause for a few moments to again muse and reflect on what this 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah has given us. Let it permeate every fiber of our entire being, because it is representative of God's entire purpose of creation, and of each of our individual involvements in it. We collectively are that purpose.

While not stated here directly, it describes an act, which expresses the perfect and ultimate divine love. It describes an act of love greater than any human could possibly understand. That act was played out over 700 years after Isaiah, just as predicted, thereby opening for us the doors to His kingdom and to eternal paradise. Further in Chapter 55 of Isaiah, verse 8, 9, God reminds us that “... *for as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*” We must always keep this fact in mind, when, in our arrogant ignorance, we question any aspect of God’s actions, or seeming in-actions, within this pain filled, suffering, and sin-filled world; when we reject, or have reluctance to accept some aspect of His written Word; or when in our own agonies and questionable faith, we cry out “dear God, why me?” “Why have you forsaken me?” “Why also my loved ones?” Why anything is, just because we don’t like or understand God’s way. I urge everyone to carry this chapter and the message of the Gospels close to you at all times. Read, consider and muse on these things. Chew on them, swallow them; digest them and let them be the sustenance that keeps us, and that causes us to grow in His likeness. Bring all of this to mind, as we kneel in prayer. Express to our God in all prayers and in every aspect of our lives, the gratitude and love that fills our hearts as recipients of His divine grace.

As a child of God and heir to eternity with Him:

- Isn’t your heart filled with love for Him and all others of His creatures?
- Isn’t your mind filled with gratitude, awe and wonderment of Him?
- Isn’t your body kept in submission and obedience to His will?
- Isn’t your soul eager to serve and worship him?
- And isn’t your spirit becoming reconnected with the Holy Spirit in a peace that defies understanding?

Is this asking too much of us? Didn’t Jesus say “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*” (Matthew 22:37) Isn’t this what He meant? Only after these five bullets have penetrated your whole being can this kind of love be fully manifested. None of us measure up, but the sanctifying process that

God works in all justified souls seeks to affect these penetrations. By keeping close to us what we have learned through Isaiah, we cannot help but recognize evidence of God's divine will enlarging in us.

AMEN

To the biblically literate and seasoned Christian, I pray that you have been patient with what may have seemed in several places as an insufferable amount of repetition and well known truths. My purpose in this has been an attempt to present God's word from different perspectives in order for the seeker, and the novice Christian to recognize and absorb as much as possible, the significance and fundamental nature of what God has given us.