

Jesus is in the Old Testament? – Lesson 2

In the previous lesson, we explored some verses that describe some of the signs that would precede the coming of the promised Messiah as well as some of the traits he would possess. In this lesson, we continue to look at some more traits the Messiah would have as well as the description of the ultimate sacrifice that he would make as we examine verses spanning from Isaiah chapters 49 through 53 and then compare them to the related New Testament Scriptures where they were fulfilled.

Isaiah 49 – ¹ Listen to me, all you in distant lands!

Pay attention, you who are far away!

The LORD called me before my birth;

from within the womb he called me by name.

² He made my words of judgment as sharp as a sword.

He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand.

I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver.

³ He said to me, “You are my servant, Israel,

and you will bring me glory.”

⁴ I replied, “But my work seems so useless!

I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose.

Yet I leave it all in the LORD’s hand;

I will trust God for my reward.”

⁵ And now the LORD speaks—

the one who formed me in my mother’s womb to be his servant,
who commissioned me to bring Israel back to him.

The LORD has honored me,

and my God has given me strength.

⁶ He says, “You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me.

I will make you a light to the Gentiles,

and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

⁷ The LORD, the Redeemer

and Holy One of Israel,

says to the one who is despised and rejected by the nations,

to the one who is the servant of rulers:

“Kings will stand at attention when you pass by.

Princes will also bow low

because of the LORD, the faithful one,

the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

⁸ This is what the LORD says:

“At just the right time, I will respond to you.

On the day of salvation I will help you.

I will protect you and give you to the people

as my covenant with them.

Through you I will reestablish the land of Israel

and assign it to its own people again.

These verses sum up the description of the coming Messiah centuries before he actually makes his appearance. There is so much here that wouldn't be fully realized until after the Messiah had come! Please take special note of verse 6 where God says that the Messiah will be a light to the Gentiles. That's us! This is quite a departure from how Gentiles were normally viewed in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 53:1-3 – ¹ *Who has believed our message?*

To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?

² *My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot,
like a root in dry ground.*

*There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance,
nothing to attract us to him.*

³ *He was despised and rejected—*

a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

You'll notice that the Messiah was not described here as the victorious ruler and king the Jews had come to expect but as a man who was despised and rejected. Now, let's look at what the New Testament has to report about how Jesus was received.

John 7:1-5 – ¹ *After this, Jesus traveled around Galilee. He wanted to stay out of Judea, where the Jewish leaders were plotting his death. ² But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, ³ and Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! ⁴ You can't become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!" ⁵ For even his brothers didn't believe in him.*

Let's continue reading about later on regarding this same festival.

John 7:10 – ¹⁰ *But after his brothers left for the festival, Jesus also went, though secretly, staying out of public view.*

If you'll now refer back to Isaiah 49:2 you can see that this has been clearly foretold. Christ was staying out of the limelight, or "hidden in the quiver" if you will, whenever possible. Not only that but later on when Jesus would heal someone, he would try to keep them quiet about what he had done.

In Luke 4 Jesus goes to Nazareth and while in the synagogue he reads from Isaiah and tells them that "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!" He also tells them about the famine in Elijah's time and how he was not sent to any of the widows in Israel but instead to a foreigner. From there, we pick up the story:

Luke 4:28-30 – ²⁸ *When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious. ²⁹ Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff, ³⁰ but he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.*

As you can see from these verses, Christ was without a doubt "despised and forsaken." He actually had to be careful where he traveled because they would try to kill him! I can't imagine what that felt like but this was all a part of the plan so that what was to come could be fulfilled.

Let's continue on reading from the New Testament.

Mark 7:35-36 – ³⁵ Instantly the man could hear perfectly, and his tongue was freed so he could speak plainly! ³⁶ Jesus told the crowd not to tell anyone, but the more he told them not to, the more they spread the news.

Matthew 8:3-4 – ³ Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared. ⁴ Then Jesus said to him, "Don't tell anyone about this...."

Christ was clearly trying to avoid becoming famous or well-known. I ask you to consider, if he was indeed the Messiah then why would he do this? Would he not be able to reach more people by being more well-known? But, our ways are not his (God's) ways. He would heal those he encountered who were hurting and in need since, like His Father, he loved us but his true purpose was our spiritual salvation that could come only through his death and resurrection. It is important for us to remember this when things aren't going in our lives the way that we think God should do them. We rarely have the full picture of God's plan.

Now, let's get back to Isaiah 53. The rest of the chapter is related directly to the crucifixion. It's very interesting to see how specific it gets with many of the minute details of the coming Crucifixion.

Isaiah 53:7 – ⁷ He was oppressed and treated harshly,
yet he never said a word.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

And as a sheep is silent before the shearers,
he did not open his mouth.

The relative New Testament scriptures:

John 19:9 – ⁹ He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer.

Matthew 27:12-14 – ¹² But when the leading priests and the elders made their accusations against him, Jesus remained silent. ¹³ "Don't you hear all these charges they are bringing against you?" Pilate demanded. ¹⁴ But Jesus made no response to any of the charges, much to the governor's surprise.

For all that Jesus suffered, he never once defended himself. What *normal*, innocent man could possibly keep silent like that?

Isaiah 53:8 – ⁸ Unjustly condemned,
he was led away.

No one cared that he died without descendants,
that his life was cut short in midstream.

But he was struck down
for the rebellion of my people.

Again, it's pointed out that the Messiah will be killed not because of His transgressions but in place of those for whom the punishment was actually due. Also, please note that it's mentioned that he dies *without* descendants. This becomes an important note here shortly.

Next, we have some Scriptures that reveal what the Messiah would suffer through while yet undeserved.

Isaiah 50:6 – ⁶*I offered my back to those who beat me
and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard.
I did not hide my face
from mockery and spitting.*

Isaiah 53:5 – ⁵*But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed.*

And the New Testament fulfillment...

Matthew 27:26-31 – ²⁶*So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. ²⁷Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. ²⁹They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!" ³⁰And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. ³¹When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.*

We have in Isaiah 53:5 a prophecy that the Messiah would be beaten, whipped, mocked, and pierced through. He was pierced through in not only the actual act of the crucifixion but also by the crown of thorns that was pounded into his skull and later the soldier's spear that was thrust into his side. He was mocked and humiliated beyond comprehension. On top of all of that, there was that incalculable weight that our sins bore on his spirit.

Isaiah 53:4 – ⁴*Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;
it was our sorrows that weighed him down.
And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for his own sins!*

I ask you now to close your eyes for a moment and picture yourself at the foot of the cross while Jesus was being crucified. In your mind, glance around you at those who really have no idea just who Jesus is. What do you think is going through their minds? Do they not undoubtedly think he is being punished for his own sins at this point? And are not many, if not all of them, likely to assume that God had smitten him for some specific reason?

Of course, we know that the only reason he was there was for *their* (and our) sins. There is such a sad irony there!

Isaiah 52:13-14 – ¹³ *See, my servant will prosper;
he will be highly exalted.*

¹⁴ *But many were amazed when they saw him.
His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human,
and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man.*

You can see here the heavy emphasis on how badly beaten the Messiah would be. These two verses further illustrate the paradox of the servant (Messiah) being prosperous and highly exalted yet so disfigured that he was barely recognizable as a man.

Isaiah 53:9 – ⁹ *He had done no wrong
and had never deceived anyone.*

*But he was buried like a criminal;
he was put in a rich man's grave.*

This verse is one of my favorite prophetic verses. Before the prophecy was fulfilled, this verse would really make no sense. But afterwards, its meaning would become very clear.

Mark 15:27-28 – ²⁷ *They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left.* ²⁸ *[And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And he was numbered with transgressors."]*

Matthew 27:57-60 – ⁵⁷ *As evening approached, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea who had become a follower of Jesus,* ⁵⁸ *went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. And Pilate issued an order to release it to him.* ⁵⁹ *Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a long sheet of clean linen cloth.* ⁶⁰ *He placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left.*

Next, we have another set of seemingly very contradicting Old Testament scriptures.

Isaiah 53:10-12 – ¹⁰ *But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him
and cause him grief.*

*Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,
he will have many descendants.*

*He will enjoy a long life,
and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands.*

¹¹ *When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish,
he will be satisfied.*

*And because of his experience,
my righteous servant will make it possible
for many to be counted righteous,
for he will bear all their sins.*

¹² *I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier,
because he exposed himself to death.*

He was counted among the rebels.

He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

There is a lot being said here that is hard to take in on first reading. Remember how it was mentioned above in Isaiah 53:8 that the Messiah would die with no descendants? Now please note that in verse 10 it says that “when his life is made an offering for sin” (or “he dies”) *then* he will see his descendants and enjoy a long life. By dying, his days would be prolonged and he would see his offspring (which we were told he would *not* have)?

Normally, this sentence would be completely confusing and considered a misstatement.

Think about it. How could one possibly have offspring and see them *after* you die? But, it does make perfect sense if the one who dies doesn’t remain that way. And of course, the descendants of which the Scriptures speak are not his *physical* offspring but his *spiritual* offspring who have accepted his sacrifice and have become redeemed (Jewish or Gentile).

Questions For Discussion

1. Discuss how each of the following traits of the Messiah listed above in Isaiah 49 could be applied to Jesus:
 - a. Called before his birth while in the womb
 - b. Words of judgment as sharp as a sword
 - c. Hidden in the shadow of God’s hand
 - d. Like a sharp arrow in God’s quiver
 - e. Works seem useless
 - f. Strength spent for nothing and to no purpose
 - g. Would trust it all to God’s hand
 - h. Light to the Gentiles, savior to all
 - i. Despised and rejected
 - j. Servant of rulers
 - k. Princes will bow low before him
 - l. Protected by God
 - m. Given by God to the people as his covenant
2. In Isaiah 49:3, it states “You are my servant, Israel” yet in the following verse 5 it states that God “commissioned me to bring Israel back to him.” Jewish scholars would argue that it is only the nation of Israel that is being talked about here in Isaiah in chapters 49-53 rather than the Messiah along with references to Israel. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
3. If the Messiah was to be the redeemer of the people and would deliver them and they knew that he was coming, why would he be described as “despised and forsaken” and “hidden in His quiver” as spoken about in Isaiah 49 as well as in Isaiah 53:3?
4. The two verses in Isaiah 52:13-14 talk about the paradox of the servant (Messiah) as being prosperous and highly exalted yet so disfigured that he was barely recognizable as a man. Considering that Jesus was so disfigured at the end due to all that had happened to him, how could he be considered “prosperous and highly exalted”?

5. Jesus kept silent before his accusers even though he was completely innocent. Why would he do that?
6. Remaining silent would be an incredibly difficult thing to do. But, everything that Jesus endured would have undoubtedly been impossible for anyone but him to endure. Rate and discuss in descending order which you think was most difficult for Jesus to endure:
 - a. Being falsely accused and remaining silent during that mockery of a trial
 - b. The beating and ridicule from the Roman soldiers
 - c. The scourging
 - d. The crucifixion
 - e. The weight of ALL of our sins
7. We know that Jesus could well defend himself in a debate. Discuss what would have happened had Jesus spoke up and defended himself in his trial? Where would we be today?