

## **The Book of Isaiah, Teacher's Guide**

### **Lesson 21: Awake, O Zion; the Suffering Servant**

#### **Isaiah 51:1–53:12**

##### **Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)**

This is the doctrinal summit of the entire study, and it should be taught with corresponding care, depth, and reverence. The aim is for the class to see, unmistakably and movingly, that the suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 is the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore our griefs, was pierced for our transgressions, had the iniquity of us all laid upon Him, and by His vicarious suffering makes many to be accounted righteous. Lead the class verse by verse through chapter 53 slowly. Let the substitutionary atonement, He suffered the penalty that was ours, stand at the center, and let the New Testament witnesses (Acts 8, 1 Peter 2, John 1:29, Hebrews 9) confirm that this is exactly how the apostles read the passage.

Hold two things together as you teach. First, present the glory of what Christ accomplished without sliding into error: this is genuine substitution and genuine justification through Christ, but it is not a limited atonement (He died for all, and the call of the gospel is universal), nor is it a righteousness received by faith only apart from obedience. Note how naturally the passage itself leads to obedient response: Philip preached Jesus from Isaiah 53, and the eunuch immediately asked to be baptized (Acts 8:35–39). Salvation is appropriated by hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized into Christ, and the saved must remain faithful. Second, do not let this become a cold doctrinal exercise. The Servant was wounded for us. Keep leading the class back to the cross until the truth moves from the head to the heart and bows them in worship and surrender.

##### **Question 1**

###### **Student Question:**

*In Isaiah 51:1–8 God calls His people to look to the rock from which they were hewn, to Abraham and Sarah, and promises that His righteousness and salvation will be forever while the heavens vanish like smoke. What does this passage teach about the permanence of God's salvation compared to the things of this world, and how does looking back at how God has worked steady our faith for the future?*

###### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 51:1–8 is addressed to those who pursue righteousness and seek the Lord, and it begins with a backward look: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you. God reminds a discouraged people that He took one elderly, childless couple and made of them a multitude. The God who did that is not stymied by their present smallness. Remembering how God has worked is medicine for present fear.

The passage then lifts the eyes forward and upward. My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out (verse 5), and the coastlands wait for the Lord. God's saving purpose, as

throughout these chapters, reaches the nations. Verse 6 sets the contrast sharply: the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

Three times in this section God tells His fearful people not to fear the reproach of mere men, who are like grass that withers (verses 7–8). The argument is one of scale. The things that frighten us, hostile people, threatening circumstances, the powers of the day, are all temporary. God's righteousness and salvation alone are permanent. To anchor in what lasts is to be freed from the tyranny of what passes.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Remembering God's past faithfulness, here His work through Abraham and Sarah, is a deliberate discipline that steadies faith in the present.
- God's salvation and righteousness are permanent while the heavens and earth are temporary; we are to anchor in what lasts (compare Matthew 24:35).
- Fear of human reproach is misplaced because people, however threatening, are like grass that withers; the fear of God displaces the fear of man.
- God's saving purpose reaches the coastlands and the peoples, continuing the worldwide theme that culminates in the gospel.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does looking to the rock from which you were hewn mean for you, and what past works of God should you be remembering?
- How does the contrast between vanishing heavens and everlasting salvation reorder what you fear and what you trust?
- Where is the fear of human reproach holding you back, and how does this passage free you from it?

## **Question 2**

### **Student Question:**

*Three times in chapters 51 and 52 comes the call, Awake, awake. Where in your own walk with God have you grown drowsy or settled into the dust, and what would it look like for you to heed the call to awake and put on strength this week?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 51:9–16 contains the first of the great awake calls, but notice who is addressed: Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord (verse 9). The people cry out for God to act as He did at the Red Sea, when He cut Rahab in pieces and dried up the sea so the redeemed could pass over. They are pleading with God to do again what He has done before, to bare His mighty arm for their rescue.

God answers with comfort and a gentle rebuke (verses 12–13): I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies? You have forgotten the Lord, your Maker. The

root of their fear is forgetting their Maker while fearing mere mortals. The cure for fear is a right-sized view of God, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, set against a right-sized view of human threats.

Verse 16 has God say, I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand. The same images we saw of the Servant in chapter 49 (words in the mouth, hidden in God's hand) appear again, weaving the people's hope tightly together with the Servant who will accomplish it. Their security rests in the God who both comforts and commissions.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The people rightly appeal to God's past acts of redemption (the exodus) as grounds to trust Him for present deliverance.
- Fear of man flows from forgetting God the Maker; a large view of God shrinks our fears to their true size.
- God Himself is the comforter of His people; comfort is not a feeling we manufacture but a gift grounded in who He is.
- The exodus deliverance is a pattern and pledge of the greater redemption God brings, ultimately in Christ.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why do we, like Israel, plead with God to act when He has already shown what He can do? How does remembering His acts strengthen us?
- God says fear of man comes from forgetting our Maker. How have you seen that connection in your own anxieties?
- What does it mean to you to be covered in the shadow of God's hand?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*In Isaiah 52:7 the prophet exclaims, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness. Paul applies this in Romans 10:15 to the preaching of the gospel. What does this verse teach us about the value God places on those who carry the message of salvation, and on the message itself?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 51:17 through 52:6 shifts the awake call to the people themselves: Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath. The city has been staggering like a drunk under the cup of judgment for her sins. The picture is sobering, the just consequence of the people's rebellion, which they bear themselves.

But then comes grace (51:22): Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more. God Himself removes the cup of wrath from His people. For the Christian this points unmistakably ahead. The cup of wrath that we deserved

would be taken up and drained by another, by the Servant, and ultimately by our Lord in Gethsemane, who prayed, Let this cup pass, and then drank it to the dregs.

Chapter 52 opens with the second awake call, now a summons to dignity and freedom: Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments. Shake yourself from the dust and arise; loose the bonds from your neck. The captive is told to live like one set free. This is gospel logic: because God has acted to redeem, His people are summoned to leave the dust of defeat and stand up in the dignity He gives.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The cup of wrath the people drank was the just consequence of their own sins, consistent with personal accountability (Ezekiel 18:20), not arbitrary cruelty.
- God's removal of the cup of wrath from His people anticipates the cup the Servant, and our Lord Jesus, would drink in their place (compare Matthew 26:39).
- The call to shake off the dust and put on beautiful garments is gospel logic: redemption accomplished leads to a transformed way of living.
- God's people are summoned to live according to the freedom He has given, not to remain in the posture of the defeated and bound.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does the image of the cup of wrath being taken away prepare us for what Jesus does in Gethsemane and at the cross?
- Where are you still sitting in the dust when God is calling you to shake yourself and arise?
- What does it look like to put on the beautiful garments of the redeemed in everyday life?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*Think about the people who first brought the good news of Jesus to you, and about your own opportunities to carry it to others. Whose feet were beautiful in bringing you the gospel, and to whom is God calling you to carry that same good news?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 52:7-10 contains one of the most beautiful announcements in Scripture: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns. Picture a runner cresting the hills with news that the battle is won and the people are free. His feet, dusty and travel-worn, are called beautiful because of the message they carry.

Paul lifts this verse straight into the heart of the gospel in Romans 10:15: How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news! For Paul, this is about evangelism, the carrying of the good news about Jesus to those who have not heard. The message that Your God reigns becomes the proclamation that God has acted decisively to save in His Christ, and that He reigns now.

The watchmen lift up their voice and sing for joy, for eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion (verse 8). Verse 10 declares, The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. The good news is not a private comfort to be hoarded; it is salvation displayed before all the nations, and God uses the beautiful feet of messengers to carry it.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God places high value on the messengers who carry the good news; their feet are beautiful because of the gospel they bring.
- Paul applies Isaiah 52:7 to gospel preaching in Romans 10:15, making this a charter text for evangelism and missions.
- The message Your God reigns is fulfilled in the reign of Christ established at His exaltation; the kingdom is present, not merely future.
- Salvation is meant to be seen by all the ends of the earth; the gospel is for the nations and must be proclaimed, not hidden.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why are the messenger's feet called beautiful? What does that tell you about how God values gospel proclamation?
- Romans 10:15 ties this to preaching the gospel. Who carried the good news to you, and whose feet might God want yours to be?
- What does it mean that the message is Your God reigns, fulfilled in Christ reigning now?

### **Question 5**

#### **Student Question:**

*Isaiah 52:13–15 opens the fourth Servant Song by declaring that the Servant will be high and lifted up, yet his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, that many were astonished at him, and he will sprinkle many nations. How does this passage hold together the exaltation and the disfigurement of the Servant, and how is this paradox fulfilled in the suffering and glory of Jesus Christ?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 52:11–15 forms a bridge into the fourth and greatest Servant Song. Verses 11–12 call God's people to depart, depart, go out, to touch no unclean thing and to be pure, for the Lord goes before them and is their rear guard. This call to come out and be clean is taken up in 2 Corinthians 6:17 as a word to the church about holiness and separation from sin.

Then at verse 13 the Servant Song begins, and it opens, strikingly, not with suffering but with exaltation: Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. The phrase high and lifted up was used in Isaiah 6 of the Lord enthroned in glory. John 12:32–33 takes the very language of being lifted up and applies it to Jesus, who would be lifted

up on the cross and then in exaltation. The song frames everything that follows within the certainty of the Servant's ultimate triumph.

But immediately the disfigurement appears (verse 14): as many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind. The Servant will be beaten beyond recognition. Held together with verse 13, we have the great paradox of the gospel: the exalted One is the marred One; glory comes through humiliation.

Verse 15 closes the opening: so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him. The word sprinkle carries the imagery of priestly cleansing, the Servant cleansing not just Israel but many nations. Paul cites the rest of the verse in Romans 15:21 regarding the gospel reaching those who had never heard. From the very first lines, the Servant's saving work is for the nations.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The call to come out and be clean (52:11) is applied to the church's holiness in 2 Corinthians 6:17.
- The Servant is high and lifted up, language used of the Lord enthroned (Isaiah 6) and applied to Jesus lifted up on the cross and in glory (John 12:32–33).
- The marring of the Servant beyond human likeness foretells the brutal physical suffering of Jesus in His passion.
- Glory comes through humiliation; the exalted Servant and the disfigured Servant are the same person, the great paradox of the cross.
- The Servant sprinkles, that is cleanses, many nations; his saving work is for the Gentiles too, fulfilled as the gospel goes to the nations (Romans 15:21).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why do you think the song opens with the Servant exalted before it ever speaks of his suffering?
- How does holding together high and lifted up with marred beyond human semblance capture the heart of the gospel?
- What does it mean that the Servant sprinkles, or cleanses, many nations, and how is that fulfilled?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*Isaiah 53:1–3 describes the Servant as one with no beauty that we should desire him, despised and rejected, a man of sorrows from whom men hide their faces. Have you ever found yourself overlooking or turning away from Jesus, perhaps because He did not match what you wanted Him to be? What does it stir in you to know He was despised and rejected, and still went to the cross for you?*

## **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 53:1–3 begins with a sigh of unbelief: Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? The mighty arm of the Lord, the same arm Israel begged to awake in chapter 51, is revealed not in a conquering warrior but in a suffering Servant, and most people will not believe it. John 12:38 quotes this verse to explain why many did not believe in Jesus despite His signs.

The Servant's origins are unremarkable (verse 2): he grew up like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him. There was nothing in His outward appearance to draw a crowd or compel allegiance. He did not match the world's picture of greatness, and so the world looked past Him.

Verse 3 is heartbreaking: He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. The Servant knew the full weight of human rejection. People hid their faces from Him, the way we instinctively look away from someone disfigured or shamed. The Lord of glory was treated as someone not worth a second glance.

There is a piercing personal note in we esteemed him not. The prophet includes himself and his people in the failure to value the Servant. This is the confession every honest reader must make. We, too, have looked past Jesus, wanted a different kind of savior, found Him not impressive enough for our tastes. And He went to the cross for the very ones who esteemed Him not.

## **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The arm of the Lord, His saving power, is revealed in a suffering Servant, not a conquering hero, which is why many would not believe (John 12:38).
- The Servant had no outward majesty; God's salvation does not come in the package the world expects or admires.
- The Servant experienced the full depth of human rejection and sorrow, which means our Lord understands rejection and grief from the inside (compare Hebrews 4:15).
- The confession we esteemed him not implicates every reader; we have all undervalued and looked past Christ.
- Jesus suffered rejection for the very people who rejected Him, displaying love that is not earned by the lovableness of its objects.

## **Discussion Prompts**

- Why was the suffering Servant so hard to believe in, and why is the arm of the Lord revealed in this way still surprising to us?
- What does it mean that Jesus had no beauty that we should desire Him? How does that confront our ideas of greatness?
- Read we esteemed him not aloud. In what ways have you esteemed Jesus too lightly?

## **Question 7**

**Student Question:**

*Isaiah 53:4–5 says, Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. What does this passage teach about the substitutionary nature of Christ's suffering, that He bore what was due to us, and why is the little word for (for our transgressions) so crucial to the gospel?*

**Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 53:4–5 is the beating heart of the chapter and arguably of the whole Old Testament, and it must be read slowly. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. Notice the great reversal of perception. Onlookers assumed the Servant was suffering for His own sins, struck down by God. They could not have been more wrong. He was bearing our griefs, carrying what was ours.

Then verse 5, every clause a precious stone: But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. Look at the little word for. He was pierced FOR our transgressions, not His own, for He had none. This is substitution at its clearest. The punishment that was ours, He took. The peace that is ours, He purchased. The healing that is ours, His wounds bought.

The verbs are violent and deliberate: pierced, crushed. These are not the words of accident or misfortune. They describe a deliberate, penal suffering, the bearing of a penalty. The chastisement, the disciplinary punishment, that brought us peace fell on Him. Our peace with God was bought at the cost of His being crushed. This is the doctrine the church calls substitutionary atonement: Christ suffered, in our place, the penalty our sins deserved.

Peter takes verse 5 and applies it directly to Jesus: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24). Peter even tells us what the healing is for: that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. The healing of Isaiah 53:5 is not first a promise of physical health; it is the healing of our deepest wound, the breach between us and God, and a healing meant to transform how we live.

Sit with the staggering exchange of these verses. We gave Him our transgressions; He gave us His peace. We gave Him our iniquities; He gave us healing. He took what was ours that He might give us what was His. Every believer who has ever found peace with God stands in debt to the One who was pierced and crushed in their place. This is not cold theology. This is the love of God laid bare on a cross.

**Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The onlookers misjudged the cross, thinking the Servant suffered for His own sins; in truth He bore the griefs and sins of others, a misjudgment we must not repeat.



- The word for (pierced FOR our transgressions) establishes substitution: the Servant bore a penalty that was ours, not His own.
- Pierced and crushed describe deliberate, penal suffering; this is the bearing of the punishment our sins deserved, the heart of substitutionary atonement.
- The peace that brings us back to God was purchased at the cost of the Servant being chastised in our place; reconciliation with God is not free in the sense of costless, it cost Him everything.
- Peter applies this to Jesus (1 Peter 2:24), and explains that the healing by His wounds is meant to free us from sin so we live to righteousness, not merely to comfort us.
- The healing of 53:5 is fundamentally the healing of our broken relationship with God through the forgiveness of sins, which must be appropriated and lived out, not a guarantee of bodily health.
- This must be presented as a genuine atonement that grounds the universal gospel call; Christ bore the penalty so that all who come to Him in obedient faith may be reconciled.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Read 53:4–5 one clause at a time. What did the Servant take, and what did He give in return?
- Why is the word for so important in he was pierced for our transgressions? What does it establish about the cross?
- Peter says by his wounds you have been healed, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. What is the healing, and what is it for?

### **Question 8**

#### **Student Question:**

*Isaiah 53 says we esteemed him stricken by God, that is, we badly misjudged what was really happening at the cross. Where have you misjudged or underestimated what Jesus did for you, and how does a deeper grasp of His suffering change the way you respond to Him today?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 53:6 may be the most complete summary of the gospel in a single verse anywhere in the Old Testament: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Look at how the verse begins and ends with us, all, every one, with the Servant placed in the middle, bearing it all. Notice the structure: we have all gone astray, in the middle the iniquity is laid on Him, and the burden comes from us all.

The first half is a confession of universal sin, expressed with disarming honesty. We have gone astray like sheep, who are famous for wandering without sense or direction. And the wandering is individual as well as universal: we have turned, every one, to his own way. Sin is not merely a corporate condition; it is each person choosing his own path over God's. This fits exactly with personal accountability; each of us has turned, each is responsible (compare Romans 3:23, all have sinned).

The second half is the heart of the atonement: the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. God Himself, the offended party, takes the iniquity of all the straying sheep and lays it on the Servant. The verb pictures a weight being set down on Him, the crushing load of the sin of us all. This is the divine initiative in salvation. We did not arrange this rescue; the Lord laid our sin on His Servant.

We must be careful and clear here. The iniquity of us all means the atonement is wide enough for all; Christ died for every sinner, and the gospel call goes out genuinely to everyone. This is not a sacrifice for a pre-selected few. At the same time, the benefit of His sacrifice is received, not automatic. As the chapter itself will say, the Servant makes many to be accounted righteous, and Scripture is clear about how that righteousness comes to us. We must respond in obedient faith.

How, then, do we receive what the Servant has done? The clearest answer comes from the very passage we are studying. In Acts 8 the Ethiopian eunuch was reading Isaiah 53, and Philip, beginning with this Scripture, told him the good news about Jesus. The eunuch's immediate response was, See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized? And Philip baptized him, and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:35–39). The natural, Spirit-guided response to hearing Isaiah 53 preached as the good news about Jesus was faith expressed in baptism. So it is for us: we hear of the Servant who bore our iniquity, we believe in Him, we repent and confess Him, and we are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:26–27), and then we walk faithfully in Him.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Isaiah 53:6 confesses universal human sin: all have gone astray, and each has turned to his own way, consistent with personal accountability and Romans 3:23, not inherited guilt.
- Sin is both universal (all we) and individual (every one to his own way); each person is personally responsible for his own wandering.
- The Lord Himself laid the iniquity of us all on the Servant; salvation originates in God's initiative, not human merit.
- The iniquity of us all shows the atonement is sufficient and offered for all; Christ died for everyone, and the gospel call is genuinely universal, not limited to a select few.
- The benefit of the Servant's sacrifice is received through obedient faith, not automatically and not by faith only apart from obedience; the many are accounted righteous as they respond to Him.
- Acts 8:35–39 models the response: Philip preached Jesus from this very passage, and the eunuch believed and was baptized, a natural and non-anachronistic picture of how we come to Christ today (hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized, Acts 2:38).
- Having come to Christ, the redeemed must remain faithful; the atonement is not a license that removes the call to walk in Him (compare Hebrews 10:26–31).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Trace the shape of 53:6: it begins with us all and ends with us all, with the Servant bearing it in the middle. What does that structure preach?
- What does it mean that the Lord Himself laid our iniquity on the Servant, and why does that matter for understanding grace?
- In Acts 8 the eunuch heard this very chapter preached and asked to be baptized. How do we receive what the Servant has done for us?

## Question 9

### Student Question:

*Isaiah 53:6, 10–12 declares, All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all; and that it was the will of the Lord to crush him, that out of the anguish of his soul he shall make many to be accounted righteous, for he shall bear their iniquities. What does this heart of the chapter teach about how lost we are apart from Christ, what God accomplished by laying our iniquity on His Servant, and how the many are accounted righteous through Him? Drawing on Acts 8:32–39, where Philip preached Jesus from this very passage and the eunuch was then baptized, how do we today come to receive what the Servant has done for us?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Isaiah 53:7–9 portrays the Servant's silent, willing submission and His death. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. The lamb imagery is unmistakable. John the Baptist would later point to Jesus and say, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The Servant goes to His death without protest, without retaliation, in willing obedience.

This is the very passage the Ethiopian eunuch was reading in Acts 8:32–33 when Philip joined him. The eunuch asked, About whom does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else? And Philip, beginning with this Scripture, told him the good news about Jesus. There is no clearer New Testament confirmation that Isaiah 53 is about the Lord Jesus Christ. The lamb led silently to slaughter is Jesus before Pilate and on the cross.

Verse 8 speaks of His unjust death: By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? He was cut off, killed, and even in His death it was for the transgression of God's people, again the substitution. Verse 9 notes He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

That detail in verse 9, with the wicked yet with a rich man, is remarkable. Jesus was crucified between criminals, numbered with the wicked, yet was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man (Matthew 27:57–60). And the reason given is His complete innocence: He

had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. The sinless Servant died the death of the guilty so the guilty could go free.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The Servant's silent, non-retaliating submission fulfills the picture of Jesus before His accusers (compare 1 Peter 2:23) and reveals His willing obedience.
- The lamb led to slaughter is identified by John the Baptist as Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).
- Acts 8:32–35 confirms beyond dispute that this passage is about Jesus; Philip preached the good news about Jesus beginning from these very verses.
- The Servant was cut off, that is, killed, and His death was for the transgression of God's people, reaffirming the substitution.
- The detail of a grave with the wicked yet with a rich man finds precise fulfillment in Jesus crucified with criminals and buried in the rich man Joseph's tomb (Matthew 27:57–60).
- The Servant's complete sinlessness (no violence, no deceit) qualifies Him to die in the place of sinners; only a sinless substitute could bear others' guilt.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why is the lamb imagery so important, and how does John 1:29 confirm who the Lamb is?
- Acts 8 records the eunuch reading these very verses. How does Philip's answer settle the question of whom Isaiah is describing?
- What does the Servant's sinlessness (no violence, no deceit) have to do with His ability to die in our place?

### **Question 10**

#### **Student Question:**

*Having gazed at the suffering Servant who was pierced for your transgressions and bore the iniquity of us all, name one specific way that looking at Christ crucified is reshaping you, your attitude toward your own sin, toward grace, toward others, and one concrete step you will take this week to live as one for whom He suffered and died.*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Isaiah 53:10–12 turns from the suffering to its astonishing purpose and outcome, and it opens with one of the hardest and most glorious lines in Scripture: Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief. The cross was no accident, no tragedy that caught God by surprise. It was His deliberate plan. This is exactly what Peter preached at Pentecost: Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). The Father willed the redemption that the Son willingly accomplished.

The verse continues: when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. The Servant's death is a guilt offering, a sacrifice for sin. And then, beyond death, He shall see His offspring and prolong His

days. The Servant dies, yet lives again and sees a multitude of spiritual children. Here, veiled but real, is the resurrection. Death does not have the last word over the Servant.

Verse 11 reaches the goal of the whole chapter: Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. The righteous One makes many righteous. How? By bearing their iniquities. This is justification grounded in substitution: He bears the iniquity, and the many are accounted righteous. Christ's satisfaction in seeing the saved (he shall be satisfied) is the joy set before Him for which He endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

Verse 12 gives the Servant His reward and sums up His work: Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many; because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. He poured out His soul to death, numbered with the transgressors (fulfilled as Jesus was crucified between two criminals, Luke 22:37), He bore the sin of many, and He intercedes. Hebrews 9:28 echoes it: Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. The Servant who died now lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Let the chapter land where it aims. The many are accounted righteous, not because their sin was small or overlooked, but because the righteous Servant bore it in their place and rose to intercede for them. This is the gospel: Christ crucified for our sins, raised, exalted, satisfied in the salvation of His people, and pleading for us still. The only fitting response is to come to Him, in the obedient faith Acts 8 models, and to spend our lives, satisfied in Him as He is satisfied in saving us.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The crushing of the Servant was the deliberate will of God, fulfilling His redemptive plan (compare Acts 2:23), not an accident or a defeat.
- The Servant's death is a guilt offering, a true sacrifice for sin, the reality behind the whole sacrificial system (compare Hebrews 9–10).
- He shall see his offspring and prolong his days points to the resurrection; the Servant lives again beyond His death and gathers a great spiritual family.
- The Servant makes many to be accounted righteous by bearing their iniquities; this is justification grounded in substitution, received through obedient faith in Christ, not by faith only apart from obedience nor limited to a select few.
- Christ was numbered with the transgressors, fulfilled as He was crucified between criminals (Luke 22:37), bearing the sin of many (Hebrews 9:28).
- The risen, exalted Servant makes intercession for the transgressors; our Lord lives to intercede for those who draw near to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25).
- The satisfaction of the Servant in seeing His redeemed people is the joy set before Christ, and it calls us to respond by coming to Him and remaining faithful (Hebrews 12:2).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does it change your view of the cross to read that it was the will of the Lord to crush Him, willingly accepted by the Servant?
- Where do you see the resurrection hinted at in these verses (he shall see his offspring, prolong his days)?
- He makes many to be accounted righteous by bearing their iniquities. How are we counted righteous, and how do we receive it?