

The Redemptive Impact of Isaiah 53: (part one of a four part series)

One of the most powerful descriptions of the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is provided for us in the Old Testament oracle of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 53. It has undoubtedly been a primary source of witness regarding our Savior to the many Jewish people who have become converts to Christ in these last days. I believe Isaiah 53 can also serve the purpose of preparing our hearts in a fresh way for celebrating the death and resurrection of our Lord in the upcoming days. With that in mind, consider the unique manner in which Isaiah begins chapter 53 in v1 –

“Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

The prophet begins with two rhetorical questions which establish the context for the entire chapter. The implication is that very few would respond positively to the appearing of the promised Messiah; so much so, that these two questions can rightly be viewed as a lament. But why? The answer is given in vv2-3 –

“For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised and we did not esteem Him.”

Simply put, Israel’s Messiah did not meet their expectations. He wasn’t the tall, dark and handsome political and military leader who would deliver them from the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire, under which they had lived for so long. Instead, the emphasis of His ministry would be upon the spiritual rather than the physical; the eternal rather than the temporal aspects of the Kingdom of God. Since Jesus wasn’t the kind of Messiah the people of Israel wanted, He was rejected; just as the apostle John would later write, in John 1:11 –

“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.”

Nevertheless, as we will discover, Israel’s rejection of her Messiah would make God’s plan of salvation available to the entire world.