

## **The Scorned Servant of Jehovah, Part 1 (Isaiah 53:1-3)**

For now I want you to open the Word of God to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 53. We have had a couple of weeks of getting introduced to this chapter. Two weeks ago a rather broad introduction and then last Lord's day, which was resurrection Sunday, we looked at the introduction to chapter 53 that is given at the end of chapter 52. And that brings us, today, to this incredible chapter, Isaiah 53.

This text is a bottomless well of biblical truth and reality. The more I search it, the deeper it goes. It is unparalleled, in my judgment, in Scripture, and to understand it would be the challenge of a lifetime. It is deep, it is high, and it is wide. And I will do the best I can to discern all that is here for us and leave, even having done that, much to you for your own future study. But to set this incomparable chapter in your mind, I want to read it to you, starting in verse 1.

"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 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. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him and by His scourging we are healed.

"All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

"His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied. By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and He was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors."

While for believers through the centuries, this chapter has been a point of triumphant joy and profound blessing as it looks at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the truth about it is that this is a sad song. This is a sorrowful song. This is a lament. This is a song of regret. This is a song of remorse. This is a minor-key hymn of repentance. This chapter actually constitutes the greatest confession that will ever be made in the history of the world by one nation. And as far as Scripture is concerned, there is only one nation that will, as a nation, turn to Christ, and that is the nation of Israel. That is God's promise to them in the future.

When they do turn to Christ, this will be their confession. You notice as I read, all the way down to verse 10 the verbs are in the past tense. Most people think of this chapter as a future prophecy concerning Christ and it is that. It gives us so many details about Christ and His death and burial and resurrection and exaltation, as to be unmistakably a prophecy of Him. But it is not written in the future tense. It is not a prophet prophesying what will happen to Jesus. It is a prophet prophesying the salvation of Israel in the future when they look back and say this about the Messiah they rejected and crucified. It is the lament of Israel when they look back on the Messiah that they have long rejected.

This is the most profound Old Testament prophecy, the most far-reaching, the most detailed Old Testament prophecy on the vicarious, substitutionary sacrificial atoning death of the Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah who is Jesus. It is that. It is the premiere Old Testament look at the cross, the death and the

atonement of Christ. But its primary purpose is to say to Israel that one day in the future you will turn from your rejection, and you will look back at the gospel and at Messiah and you will realise that you have rejected your only hope, your only Saviour, your Messiah Yeshua, and this will be your lament. This is what they will say in that future generation.

Yes, in this chapter we read that the Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah, will bear the sin of transgressors, that He will experience the judgment of God who will be pleased to crush Him, to make Him a guilt offering, to have Him bear the sins of many. Yes, this chapter says that in providing an atonement to satisfy God, He will die, which is necessary to provide forgiveness of sin. But He will not remain dead, for we just read that He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hands. He will see light, literally, and be satisfied. The resurrection is here, and then He will be exalted. It's all here.

But you have to understand that this chapter while it speaks of the cross, speaks of it in retrospect from the vantage point of the time in the future when Israel repents of their long rejection of Jesus Christ. The Jews since the New Testament time have been profoundly disturbed by this chapter, profoundly. So much so that in many synagogues it is not read in the normal reading of Scripture. It is skipped. Those who do read it and face it have decided that the suffering Servant here is not the Messiah and not Jesus, but Israel.

Israel is the righteous sufferer. Israel is the righteous sufferer here, who because of suffering righteously will one day be rewarded for that righteous suffering by being blessed and becoming a blessing to the world. That's how the rabbis view it. And they do it because they don't want it to be Jesus, and they have to find an explanation for why the Jews have suffered so brutally for so long. And to make sure that they haven't suffered in vain, they view this chapter as a tribute to the righteous suffering of Israel from which God will reward them, glorify them, and through which God will bless the world. Which is to say that they don't see reality.

This isn't Israel. It can't be. They are neither an innocent sufferer such as the one described here, nor a voluntary sufferer. They need to recognise that they need one to die to pay the penalty for their sins. They're unwilling to recognise that. They want a king and a ruler...remember what I told you...to deliver them from their enemies, their circumstances and their suffering but not their sins. They are not the righteous sufferer here who will be rewarded by God. That's part of a self-righteous works system. What they need to understand is they have been through all these centuries an unrighteous sufferer.

They have suffered the judgment of God on them for the rejection of Christ. And they're still suffering it even now. And they will continue to suffer the judgment of God for the rejection of Christ until that day in the future when they, as a nation, turn to Him. Along the way, any Jew can come to faith in Christ and many have, and many of you are Jews who have come to faith in Christ. But, nationally, they continue to be under divine judgment, waiting for the salvation that will come followed by the blessing of the fulfilment of all the promises that God gave to Abraham and David and the prophets of the glory of the Kingdom.

This is not a revelation that honours Israel for suffering that leads to blessing. This is Israel's repentance. This is Israel's broken-hearted lament. This is Israel's confession by a generation yet to come. In a personal sense, every Jewish person who comes to Christ can pray this same lament. And in a national sense, it is yet to come in the future. And it will come. As I said, Scripture only promises the salvation of one nation. Individuals from every nation, tongue, tribe, people, but only the salvation of one nation, and that is Israel. And they will, in the future, repent and turn to Christ.

So while in a sense this looks forward to the event of the death and resurrection, and even exaltation, of Christ, and gives us details about those marvelous realities, in the purest sense it is a look beyond the cross at the conversion of Israel and what they will say when they look back. There are people, astute people, students of Scripture, theologians, preachers, writers who don't believe in the future salvation of Israel. They don't believe that the Kingdom will be on earth. They're not pre-millennial and my judgment is that they can't interpret this chapter because this is the prayer of confession of national Israel at the time of their future conversion.

Now just to give you the big picture again. I don't want to go over a lot of detail, but remember now, Isaiah is living at a time prior to the Babylonian Captivity when the Jews were carried away as captives by the pagan Babylonians. The kingdom had split after Solomon, northern kingdom Israel, southern

kingdom Judah. 722, the northern kingdom had gone off into captivity; they were long gone. And now Isaiah comes along and prophesies 700 years or so before Christ, 650 years before Christ and he says, "You're going into captivity, too. You're going into captivity from which you will return." Israel didn't return, the northern kingdom, but you will go into captivity, in Babylon, and you will come back. And it happened.

It happened about 80 years after Isaiah died, and the first deportation when the Babylonians came was in 603. The next one 597, and the final one, 586, Jerusalem was destroyed, people were massacred and the Jews were hauled off by the pagans into captivity where they hung their harps on the willows and wept because they didn't have their promised land anymore. But Isaiah says to them this will happen, but that's not the end of the story. You will be restored. You will come back. You will return. So God will put you in a historical captivity and He will bring you back. He will deliver you; He will save you. That's the emphasis of the first section in the second half, chapters 40 to 66.

The first section is about that historical captivity and we know it happened. They were hauled off into captivity, 70 years of captivity. Later they came back and they rebuilt and they reestablished in the land and they're still there. They're still there. That prophecy came to pass exactly as God said it would be, that Babylonians took them away, they came back, they re-established in the land. More importantly, following that discussion from Isaiah, he tells them in the future there will be a greater deliverance, a far greater deliverance. Not a deliverance from Babylon, but a deliverance from sin, a deliverance from sin. You will be saved as a nation. You will be delivered from sin by the work of the Servant of the Lord.

And so the Messiah is the theme of this great section of Isaiah. We call chapter 42, 49, 50, and 53 the Servant Songs because all four of those chapters look at the Messiah and identify Him as the Servant of the Lord. So much more important than your temporal deliverance is your spiritual deliverance, far more important. You will be saved, spiritually. You will be saved eternally from sin and judgment and hell. And then He closes His prophecy in the last chapters by saying, "Then you will have the Kingdom and this is what the Kingdom will be like, the great Kingdom of Christ."

So this chapter, 53, which is in the middle of the middle section, right at the heart of it as we pointed out, tells us the Jews are going to make a future turn and they're going to repent, they're going to turn to Christ and they're going to be saved. This is just a marvelous reality. Now I want to identify the subject of this chapter as the one called in 52:13 "My Servant." God is the speaker, by the way, in verses 13 to 15, God speaking through Isaiah. And then God becomes the speaker again at the end of chapter 53. God picks up and becomes the speaker. In the middle, it is Israel making its confession. God introduces His Servant and talks about how He will be marred, or humiliated in His death and be exalted so that the kings in the nations of the world are in awe of Him.

That's His suffering and glory. And then God gives the final word as again He talks about the meaning of His suffering and His glory to follow. But in the middle it's this amazing confession of Israel. The Servant, My Servant; I need to just say a word about that. Some of you will remember some months ago when I wrote a book called *Slave*, and somewhere in that book I pointed out that the Old Testament word for slave is *ebed*... in English it would be E-B-E-D... and that that is used 800 times in the Old Testament and it is the word for slave. And so when God Himself, who is the speaker in 52:13, identifies the Messiah, He calls Him "My Slave, My Slave."

Following up a little bit on that. The dominant idea of *ebed*, if I can give it to you in the Hebrew. The dominant idea and this source for this would be no less than one of the best of Old Testament scholars, Dr. Walter Kaiser, who is just a phenomenal student of Old Testament Scripture. Walt Kaiser said this, "The dominant idea of *ebed* is not primarily a reference to subordination, but to ownership." That's what it means to be a slave. My Servant, the Messiah is the Slave of God. What does that mean? That God determines everything He does. He has no independent will of His own. He serves at the will of God and the pleasure of God.

And by the way, if you think that's a demeaning word, slave, mark this out. In the Old Testament prophets are called slaves of God, kings are called slaves of God. And just for an example, Moses is called the Slave of God 17 times, which is to say that very distinguished people have that kind of relationship to God. Even the Messiah, who from Philippians 2, remember, thought it not something to be grasped, to hang on to what He had, but humbled Himself, took upon Himself the form of a slave, the Greek word *doulos*. So the Messiah does the Father's will and only the Father's will. This is the testimony of Jesus.

Read the gospel of John and how many times do you hear Him say, "I only do what the Father wills Me to do, I only do what the Father shows Me to do, I only do what the Father does, I only do what the Father desires Me to do. I do what I do to please the Father, and finally culminating in His life He says, "Not My will but Yours be done." That's slave talk. The Messiah then is identified as this one who is the possession of God. Consequently the pronoun is My Servant, the one that is Mine. This is the Messiah. So the Servant of Jehovah is the person being spoken of by the future generation of Jews as they lament.

Now we know who that is. It is Jesus. It is Jesus. If you want to try an experiment, find a Jewish friend who doesn't believe in Jesus, and say, "I'd like to read you something." Don't tell him what you're reading, and just read Isaiah 53 and say, "Who's that talking about?" It is the testimony of many that Jewish people will say, "Well, that's about Jesus." Really, where do you think that came from in the Bible? "Oh, Matthew, Mark." No. Isaiah, Isaiah. This is clearly talking about Jesus Christ and, of course, in the New Testament there are thirty references, explicit and implicit, in the gospels alone back to this chapter. And in the New Testament there are fifty such references back to this chapter. This is clearly a prophecy that speaks about the death, resurrection and future exaltation of Messiah who is none other than Yeshua, Jesus.

The Jews don't want to accept that. And they give a testimony in that future generation. And listen to their testimony in verse 1, "Who has believed our message? For to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" This great penitent cry, this heartbroken confession from a future generation of Jews and from any individual Jew who comes to Christ at any point in time, every Jew being saved and included in the church has to make this confession that up to that point they were wrong about Jesus. But when they look back, the first thing they're going to say is, "We didn't believe it, we didn't understand it." The revelation concerning Jesus has been met with unbelief, with unbelief. But in a future day, that will all change. It will all change.

When is that future day going to be? Well I can tell you what the Bible says about that. Turn to Zechariah 12, Zechariah chapter 12. Zechariah comes 500 years before Christ, maybe 150 or so years after Isaiah, they've gone into Babylonian Captivity, they've come back. They've rebuilt, they've re-established themselves in the land. and God raises up this prophet by the name of Zechariah. And he takes a look at that future event. Chapter 12 verse 1, "This is the burden of the Word of the Lord concerning Israel." All right, this is going to be a prophecy concerning the future of Israel. And this is coming...this is coming from a good source, "The Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth and formed the spirit of man within him," okay?

So we know this didn't come from any human source, okay? This is the word of the Creator God. "I'm going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around." And then in verse 3, "Jerusalem is going to be a heavy stone," and all who lift it are going to be seriously injured. You tamper with Jerusalem and it's going to backfire. You're going to be injured and you're going to wind up reeling and staggering like a drunk if you touch Jerusalem. What's He talking about? End of verse 2, a siege against Jerusalem and Judah, Judah being the countryside, Jerusalem being the main city. And where's this siege coming from? End of verse 3, "All the nations of the earth will be gathered against it."

Oh boy, the whole world is going to attack Israel. Does that sound like something very remote or very possible? And when they start to attack, the Lord will protect His people. In fact, verse 6 He says, "I'll make the clans of Judah like a fire pot. - " These are the people in outlying defenseless areas of the countryside - "like a fire pot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, and they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem." So when the enemies start to come, they're going to come through the countryside, first of all, and as they come through the countryside, God is going to burn them up on the way to Jerusalem.

And then verse 8, "The Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem." And then in verse 9, "I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." Are you hearing that, nations? You want to aim your nuclear weapons at Israel? You want to aim your missiles at Jerusalem? The time is coming when the world will collect against Israel. Massive Islamic movement across Europe, surrounding Israel to the east, to the north, to the south, is a threat that is beyond comprehension. If you're in a jet Airplane and you fly from the Mediterranean Sea where you cross into Israel, you have to turn around in two minutes or you'll be across the eastern border of Israel, that's how small that tiny country is.

They are under siege by the world. Anti-Zionism is rampant. Even across Europe, where people don't want to be anti-Semitic because it's not politically correct...that's anti-Jewish...they are eager to be anti-Zionists against the state of Israel. The world is...the evil world is focusing itself on Israel. So when that comes to fruition, who knows how that starts? Maybe Israel pre-emptively sends a nuclear weapon to Iran. Maybe Iran sends a nuclear weapon to Israel. Who knows what the scenario will be. But when those nations come against Israel, verse 10 says that's the moment. "I will pour out on the house of David, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem - " those are expressions designating Israel - "the Spirit of grace and supplication in that moment. In those hours, or days, whatever it is, a few weeks, whatever it is, "I'll pour out My Spirit, the Spirit of grace and supplication so that they will look on Me whom they've pierced."

And right there God says they'll look on Me because I was incarnate in Christ. They pierced Him, they pierced Me. He even says, "They will look on Me whom they've pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourns for an only Son." They'll weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. Verse 11, there will be great mourning, the land will mourn; verse 12, families, wives, husbands, everybody alone and together, all weeping and mourning, under siege and seeing God defend them initially. "And in that day - " chapter 13 verse 1 - "a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for impurity. A fountain to cleanse them. That's their salvation.

When's it going to happen? In the last day when Israel is under massive siege from the nations. In that hour they will be defenseless. They will have nowhere to turn. Their only hope will be in God, and in sovereign grace the Spirit will come, the Spirit of grace who hears the supplication, and He will turn their hearts so they will look backwards in history and they will look back to the one they pierced and the words of their confession will be the words of Isaiah 53. Bitter weeping, as one mourns for an only Son. Mourning for that only Son of God, the Messiah. Will it be the whole nation? Will it be every Jew? No, if you go down to verse 8 of chapter 13, we read, "It will come about in all the land," declares the Lord, "that two parts in it will be cut off and perish."

When the nations come, two thirds will die. Two thirds will be left in unbelief. "But a third will be left in it and I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name. I will answer them. I will say they are My people and they will say the Lord is my God." That's the salvation of Israel. And that salvation comes because they look back on the one they pierced. They pierced His feet, they pierced His hands, they pierced His side. They begin to turn to God in desperation. In the middle of the horrors of that global assault, at that point the Spirit comes on them, and a third of them are brought to the awareness that they have pierced their Messiah, they'll look back on Christ, they'll see Him in all His beauty, His death, resurrection will become real to them. And they will be saved.

A fountain of cleansing will be opened to wash them from sin and from impurity. One third of them will be protected in that great Armageddon, and they will be the sheep who go into the Kingdom that our Lord spoke about. He will then establish the Kingdom. Chapter 14, "A day is coming, the day when the Lord establishes His Kingdom, I will gather the nations against Jerusalem to battle." This is the battle of Armageddon when He destroys all the ungodly. Verse 3, the Lord goes forth, fights against them, and at that moment is the Second Coming. He puts His feet on the Mount of Olives, splits the Mount of Olives from the middle going to the east and the west by a large valley and establishes His Kingdom.

In that day there's no light. The Luminaries will dwindle. Remember in the book of Revelation, the sun goes out. The book of Joel says the same thing, the moon goes out, the stars go out and Jesus appears in blazing glory in the sky. And that's described by our Lord in Matthew 24 and 25, as well. A unique day, known to the Lord only, neither day nor night. It will come about, the Lord only knows when. No man knows the day or the hour, right? Verse 9 sums it up, "The Lord will be King over all the earth in that day, the Lord will be the only one and His name the only one." That's the millennial Kingdom and He reigns and rules supremely.

Ezekiel saw this same thing. Turn for just a brief moment. We don't have time to consider everything in it, but turn to Ezekiel 38. The Prophet Ezekiel, in chapter 38, receives a word from the Lord. And if you have a MacArthur Study Bible you can read all the notes and identify all these places. But there's a coalition of Middle Eastern nations that come against Israel. This is the same scene. And if you do a little of the background work, you find that these are places like Iran, Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, ancient grounds of Armenia, eastern/western Turkey, all these nations come together.

It's the Middle East coming together to come against Israel. "They come like a storm, -" verse 9 - "they come like a cloud, troops, many people. This is the same thing Zechariah's talking about, this massive, global attack. And they think they're going to go up against the land of unwalled villages in verse 11, this unprotected area. But the Lord is not going to let that happen. The Lord is going to protect His people.

I wish we could go through it in detail, but maybe because we don't have a lot of time, if you go down to verse...chapter 39, say verse 29, that's as close as we can get to covering the ground. Well let's back up to verse 7, I can't resist this. "In that day when the Lord judges all these nations," verse 4 says they're going to fall on the mountains of Israel. "You and all your troops and all the people with you, you're going to be food for every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field." The Lord's just going to decimate those nations.

Verse 7, "My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people, Israel." That's their salvation again, see. "My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel. I'll not let My holy name be profaned anymore, the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is coming and it shall be done." This is what's going to happen. Verse 21, "I will see My glory among the nations, the nations will see My judgment which I have executed in My hand which I have laid on them." And I love this, verse 22, "And the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God from that day onward." And then down to verse 29, "I will not hide My face from them any longer." Wow! God's been hiding His face from them, "For I will have poured out My Spirit, the Spirit of grace and supplication, from [Zechariah 12:10](#), on the house of Israel, declares the Lord God."

So you get it? This is when it's going to happen. Now let's go back to Isaiah 53. Is that near? Well, Israel is the bull's eye for the Middle East. The target, the enemy, and the nations of the world continually seem to be disaffected toward Israel. Nations that once were great friends and defenders of Israel seemed to be backing away from that, even our own nation. The world is succumbing to Islamic propaganda, Muslim growth, anti-Zionism rapidly growing. And Israel is losing its protectors, maybe even our country. Such a war against Israel, as Zechariah sees and as Ezekiel sees, is not a remote reality. I often think about the fact that how can you miss this? I mean, if the whole world was ganged up against Argentina, that would be a problem because that's not in the Bible. But this is. Is that some kind of strange coincidence?

But when that day comes...now back to Isaiah 53, and we'll at least do one verse. (Laughter) When that day comes, this is their...this is their response, verse 1, and this is perfect introduction. "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The first thing they're going to say is, "We didn't believe it. We didn't believe. Message? What do you mean? What message?" The message concerning Messiah Yeshua. The message concerning the Servant of the Lord, Messiah Jesus, His humiliation, His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, intercession, coronation. The message of the gospel.

What do they mean our message? Very important. The Hebrew does not refer to a message we gave, although there were Jews who preached it. The prophets were all Jews who predicted it. John the Baptist was a Jew who identified Jesus. Jesus is Jewish. All the apostles are Jewish, all the writers of the gospels are Jewish, all the writers of the New Testament are Jewish. So, in a sense, it is a message given by Jewish people to Jewish people.

But that's not the intent of the word here because the word "our" refers not to what we gave, but to what was given to us. It is a passive participle with reference to the message and literally is this, "Who has believed the message that was heard by us?" That's the meaning of this term. The language is referring to what we heard. And it is an admission that we heard it. But we didn't believe it. The message is viewed not from the speaker's perspective, but from the hearers. The message of Messiah Jesus that we heard concerning His suffering and glory.

Now listen, virtually every Jew in the world since the New Testament has heard the message of Jesus in order that he might reject it. Right? I mean, the Jewish religious establishment has been very busy discrediting the message of Jesus and pre-emptively telling the message so it can be discredited. There would be no other group of people, probably, no other ethnic group of people who have had such an exposure to the gospel as the Jewish people have. Virtually every Jew knows Jewish history. They know the Old Testament and the prophets. And they know the New Testament history concerning Jesus. They

have a view of it. I'll tell you about it next week. They have a view of who Jesus is. And it's not nice, it's not good.

So when the future remnant looks back, they're going to say, "Who has believed the message we heard?" Because they heard it. The apostle Paul understands the meaning of that confession because in Romans chapter 10 he makes reference to it. Romans 10 verse 11, Paul writes, "The Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed. There's no distinction between Jew and Greek, the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him. For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Then he says, "How will they call on Him they haven't believed? How will they believe in Him they haven't heard? How will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they're sent?"

So, we have a problem. People can't believe unless they hear. They can't hear unless somebody goes. They don't go unless they're sent. That's true generally. However, in reference to the Jews, verse 16, they did not all heed the good news, for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Then He says, "Faith comes by hearing, and by the hearing of the Word of Christ but they didn't believe." Paul literally says the Jews didn't believe exactly as Isaiah said. They haven't through centuries. Oh a remnant, of course. [Isaiah 6:10](#), there will always be a tenth, a stump, a holy seed, a remnant. And then in verse 21 of Romans 10 he says, "God speaks in this verse - " in verse 21 - "His own words." [Isaiah 65:2](#), "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient obstinate people." They know it, they don't believe it. So the opening confession is this amazing statement, "We've heard it, we've heard it, and we've heard it, but we haven't believed it." We haven't believed it.

And to drive the point home, there's a second question, "And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The arm of the Lord, simply a symbol of divine power. Literally the forearm, but a symbol of divine power. [Isaiah 51:9](#), [Isaiah 52:10](#) talks about the arm of the Lord as a symbol of power. In a very real sense, the Messiah is the arm of the Lord. In another sense, the gospel is the arm of the Lord because the gospel, [Romans 1:16](#), "is the power of God unto salvation." So it's another way of saying God un-bared His arm. He pulled His arm out of His garment and showed us His arm, showed us His strength, showed us His power to save and we didn't understand it. We didn't understand it.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone who believes, the Jew first, also to the Greek. This is [John 1:11](#), "He came unto His own and His own - " What? - "received Him not." Why didn't they believe? There's a theological reason why they didn't believe. Theological reason why they didn't believe, it takes us back to Romans 10, and the answer is because they didn't need a sacrifice. They didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah because He was dead, crucified. They didn't need a sacrifice.

What do we mean by that? Romans 10, Paul says "They were seeking to establish their own righteousness." That's...that's the point. They didn't...they didn't have any inadequacy. They could establish their own righteousness without an alien imputed righteousness being given to them by Christ. They didn't understand, He says, that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes, that it's by faith. They had an inadequate view of the righteousness of God. They had an inadequate view of their own sin because they went about to establish their own righteousness. So they didn't subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

I always say it this way, they thought God was less righteous than He was, they were more righteous than they were, so they could come to God on their terms. They rejected Jesus Christ because they, again, were looking for a king and a ruler to deliver them from their enemies, their circumstances, and their suffering, not their sin. They were self-righteous. That's why when Jesus did come, the remnant that did get saved during His ministry were all the riff-raff. That's what they accused Him of. He hangs around with prostitutes and sinners and drunkards, people who have been thrown out of the synagogue. And Jesus' answer was, "I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."

That's the problem. If you have an inadequate doctrine of sin, then you don't understand why a Savior died. So the spiritual reason, the theological reason, you could say that they have rejected Christ is that they're righteous on their own. They have an inadequate view of sin and therefore an inadequate view of righteousness and atonement. There's another reason why they don't believe. And it's because of the sovereignty of God. Look, if they're going to be self-righteous, He's going to reach out His hands all day long to a disobedient and obstinate people. But there's going to come a time when He shuts that down.

Listen to John 12. This is a powerful portion of Scripture. John chapter 12, it's an extended one. I'm not going to read all of it, but I want you to get this part of it that refers back to Isaiah 53. John 12, let's pick it up at verse 32, "Jesus says, 'If I be lifted up, I'll draw them in to Myself.'" They know what He's talking about. He's going to be crucified, He said that. He's talked about His death. And so He says, "It's okay if I be lifted up, I'll draw them into Me." He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die." He was telling them, "I'm going to get crucified, I'm going to be lifted up on a cross." So the crowd says, verse 34, "We have heard out of the Law that Christ is to remain forever."

What are you talking about? You're going to be the Messiah and die? No, no, no, no. The Messiah is going to remain forever, maybe He's going to be like Enoch, or like Elijah, and never die. How can you say the Son of Man must be lifted up? What is this Son of Man? "Jesus said, 'For a little while longer, the light is among you. Walk while you have the light so the darkness doesn't overtake you. He who walks in the darkness doesn't know where the light...or doesn't know where he goes. While you have the light, believe the light so that you may become sons of light.'" You better believe, He says, you better believe. I've given you the truth, you better believe. Jesus spoke that, went away, and hid from them.

Wow. Verse 37, "Though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which He spoke, 'Lord, who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'" Then this. "For this reason that they wouldn't believe, they couldn't believe, for - " Isaiah also said, and this is in [Isaiah 6:10](#) - "he has blinded their eyes, hardened their hearts so they would not see with their eyes, perceive with their hearts, be converted and I heal them." And these things Isaiah said because he saw His glory and he spoke of Him. Verse 42 is an amazing footnote. "Many even of the rulers believed in Him." So convincing, but because of the Pharisees, they were not confessing Him for fear they would be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God."

So they were damned by wanting human approval. Why didn't they believe? From a spiritual standpoint, theological standpoint, they thought they could establish their own righteousness. From a sovereign standpoint, God shut down their opportunity sovereignly. There's one other view of their unbelief and it's the view of Isaiah 53. And starting in verse 2 and going through verse 3, they explain why they didn't believe in Jesus. They explain why. And that's got to be for next time. It is so powerful; they explain why they didn't believe. They looked at His life and they were unimpressed with the beginning of it, they were unimpressed with the middle of it, and they were unimpressed with the end of it. And the accumulation of all of that unimpressive reality in their minds was the historic reason why they didn't believe. And we'll see that next Sunday.

Lord, as we bring this wonderful time of worship to its close, we do so with profound gratitude and thanksgiving for the opportunity we have had to look into the glories of our Savior, the realities of Holy Scripture, and even beyond that to the vast and sweeping panorama of history which will culminate and end as You have determined it to do so. Father, I pray that the glory of Christ may have been shining forth in this hour both through music and through the Word, so that any who are here who have not embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior would do so even now.

I pray that Your Holy Spirit would come, the Spirit of grace and as one day in the future You will bring that saving grace and enlightenment and regeneration to national Israel, would You do that for individual sinners, Jew or Gentile, this morning. Open their hearts to embrace the truth. Refresh us in the truthfulness of Scripture, the power of Scripture, the accuracy and inerrancy of Scripture in the glory of Christ, the realities of the gospel.

Encourage us to be faithful witnesses, giving testimony to these truths to Jew and Gentile alike, knowing that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. There is neither Jew nor Greek but all are welcomed to come to Christ. May we be the source of that message. May ours be the beautiful feet that come with the good news of the Word of Christ by which saving faith can be activated by Your Holy Spirit.

Help us in these few quiet moments now to meditate on how these truths can grip our hearts in a new way and motivate our love for Christ and our love for You and our trust and our confidence in a confusing world where we can be completely at peace because you've told us that You're in charge, and You've given us even the details to look for.

Refresh us, too, in the fellowship with one another, and make us available, even the days ahead, the week ahead to bring the glorious gospel of Christ to some who need to hear. Now seal those things in our hearts, we pray. Amen.