

## ISAIAH\_19 The Servant's Mission

8/21/2011

Today, from the book of Isaiah, we are not only going to talk about **HOW** the Lord's Servant suffered, but also **WHY** His suffering was necessary.

Now, last week we saw that Israel, as God's servant, had been given the mission of being a light to the Gentile nations; however, they failed to accomplish their task.

Today, we look back on history and can see that the Lord Almighty originally planned to send His Living Word in human flesh to be His obedient Servant. And as God's Servant, Jesus, through His perfect obedience demonstrated God's Light and Truth to the Gentiles; He brought salvation to the ends of the earth and is presently restoring Israel to their land.

And in the day when He establishes the Kingdom of God on the earth and reigns from the city of Jerusalem, the whole earth will acknowledge that He is the King of kings and the Lord of Lords.

So prior to the promised Servant's arrival, God's message through Isaiah is that He wants His covenant people to have hope for their future.

### **I. God's Covenant of Blessing**

**Isaiah 51:1-3** – “Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance—all who seek the Lord! Consider the rock from which you were cut, the quarry from which you were mined. Yes, think about Abraham, your ancestor, and Sarah, who gave birth to your nation. Abraham was only one man when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation. The Lord will comfort Israel again and have pity on her ruins. Her desert will blossom like Eden, her barren wilderness like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found there. Songs of thanksgiving will fill the air.” (NLT)

This wake up call to the Remnant of Israel is straight from God to His people living in Babylon. He is telling them to **look back** and remember their roots – Abraham and Sarah. They started out in obedience as only two people, but with God's blessing on their lives they became a great prospering nation. So, God's message was “Be comforted! Cause the best is yet to come!”

Not only did God want His people to have faith for the future based on His covenant relationship with Abraham, but He wanted them to know that He would bring justice and righteousness to the nations of the world.

### **II. God's Justice Will Extend to the Ends of the Earth**

**Isaiah 51:4-8** – “Listen to me, my people. Hear me, Israel, for my law will be proclaimed, and my justice will become a light to the nations. My mercy and justice are coming soon. My salvation is on the way. My strong arm will bring justice to the nations. All distant lands will look to me and wait in hope for my powerful arm. Look up to the skies above, and gaze down on the earth below. For the skies will disappear like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a piece of clothing. The people of the earth will die like flies, but my salvation lasts forever. My righteous rule will never end! Listen to me, you who know right from wrong you who cherish my law in your hearts. Do not be afraid of people's scorn, nor fear their insults. For the moth will devour them as it devours clothing. The worm will eat at them as it eats wool. But my righteousness will last forever. My salvation will continue from generation to generation.” (NLT)

In this **second admonition**, God tells the Remnant of Israel to *look ahead* and realize that God's justice would come to the entire world. And in the Lord's **third admonition** He tells the people who have cherished God's law in their hearts, and consequently know right from wrong, to *look within* and not be afraid of other people's insults and rejection. God encourages them to have confidence for the future because His righteousness and justice will prevail and endure forever.

### III. The Remnant's Prayer for another "Exodus."

**Isaiah 51:9-16** – "Wake up, wake up, O Lord! Clothe yourself with strength! Flex your mighty right arm! Rouse yourself as in the days of old when you slew Egypt, the dragon of the Nile. Are you not the same today, the one who dried up the sea, making a path of escape through the depths so that your people could cross over? Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness." (NLT)

God seeks our highest good and following the Remnant's prayer, God answers with the promise that they will enter Jerusalem singing for joy. The sorrow of the past will be wiped away.

### IV. The Remnant's Joy

**Isaiah 51:17-23** – "I, yes I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear? Yet you have forgotten the Lord, your Creator, the one who stretched out the sky like a canopy and laid the foundations of the earth. Will you remain in constant dread of human oppressors? Will you continue to fear the anger of your enemies? Where is their fury and anger now? It is gone! Soon all you captives will be released! Imprisonment, starvation, and death will not be your fate! For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea, causing its waves to roar. My name is the Lord of Heaven's Armies. And I have put my words in your mouth and hidden you safely in my hand. I stretched out the sky like a canopy and laid the foundations of the earth. I am the one who says to Israel, 'You are my people!' Wake up, wake up, O Jerusalem! You have drunk the cup of the Lord's fury. You have drunk the cup of terror, tipping out its last drops. Not one of your children is left alive to take your hand and guide you. These two calamities have fallen on you: desolation and destruction, famine and war. And who is left to sympathize with you? Who is left to comfort you? For your children have fainted and lie in the streets, helpless as antelopes caught in a net. The Lord has poured out his fury; God has rebuked them. But now listen to this, you afflicted ones who sit in a drunken stupor, though not from drinking wine. This is what the Sovereign Lord, your God and Defender, says: 'See, I have taken the terrible cup from your hands. You will drink no more of my fury. Instead, I will hand that cup to your tormentors, those who said, 'We will trample you into the dust and walk on your backs.'" (NLT)

The remnant had asked God to "wake up;" but now God is reminding the remnant that they are His people and they need to "wake up" themselves. As they look to the Lord, their Creator and Defender, they need not fear anyone. Although they have drunk the cup of the Lord's fury because of their sins, now, the Lord will pass that cup of wrath to their tormentors. Their threats are in vain.

In addition, God promises that the day will come when unclean and godless people will no longer invade and pollute Jerusalem. That, of course, refers to the time when Jesus, the Messiah, will establish God's kingdom on this earth.

### V. God's Call to Return

**Isaiah 52:1-14** – “Wake up, wake up, O Zion! Clothe yourself with strength. Put on your beautiful clothes, O holy city of Jerusalem, for unclean and godless people will enter your gates no longer. Rise from the dust, O Jerusalem. Sit in a place of honor. Remove the chains of slavery from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For this is what the Lord says: ‘When I sold you into exile, I received no payment. Now I can redeem you without having to pay for you.’ This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘Long ago my people chose to live in Egypt. Now they are oppressed by Assyria. What is this?’ asks the Lord. ‘Why are my people enslaved again? Those who rule them shout in exultation. My name is blasphemed all day long. But I will reveal my name to my people, and they will come to know its power. Then at last they will recognize that I am the one who speaks to them.’ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns! The watchmen shout and sing with joy, for before their very eyes they see the Lord returning to Jerusalem. Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song, for the Lord has comforted his people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has demonstrated his holy power before the eyes of all the nations. All the ends of the earth will see the victory of our God. Get out! Get out and leave your captivity, where everything you touch is unclean. Get out of there and purify yourselves, you who carry home the sacred objects of the Lord. You will not leave in a hurry, running for your lives. For the Lord will go ahead of you; yes, the God of Israel will protect you from behind. See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. 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.” (NLT)

The comfort and joy that Israel will experience will be the result of Messiah’s return to Zion to reign. And His reign will be marked by a peace like the world has never seen. However, although the Lord’s servant will prosper because He perfectly obeys the Father and thus will be highly exalted to the Father’s right hand, He will also undergo suffering and disfigurement. So much so, that a person would scarcely know he was a man.

In preparation of the Servant’s arrival, God admonishes the people to leave their captivity, but don’t bring along any unclean thing from the Babylonian culture, and in this way they would purify themselves preparing the way for a divine visitation – Messiah’s arrival.

God’s message to Israel, originally through Moses at the Exodus, and here through Isaiah and then through John the Baptist in the Gospels was exactly the same. And it remains the same for us today.

**Luke 3:4-6** – “Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, ‘He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming! Clear the road for him! The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level. The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. And then all people will see the salvation sent from God.’ ” (NLT)

**2 Cor. 6:17** – “Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don’t touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you.” (NLT)

God doesn’t want us conforming to the unbelieving cultures around us.

As we proceed from chapter 52 into chapter 53, it’s as if Isaiah catches a glimpse of the obedient life and exaltation of Christ, but then Isaiah sees the amazement of the people as they observe God’s beaten and scarred Servant.

**Isaiah 52:15** – “And he will **startle** (Hebrew: *nazah* = cleanse) many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about.” (NLT)

Although the translation “startle many nations” fits the context of this passage, it doesn’t accurately translate the Hebrew word *nazah*. *Nazah* is translated “sprinkle” 24 times in the Old Testament and is used in the sprinkling of liquid (blood, oil, or water) for ritual cleansing.

**Exodus 29:21** – “Then take some of the blood from the altar and some of the anointing oil, and **sprinkle** it on Aaron and his sons and on their garments. In this way, they and their garments will be set apart as holy.” (NLT)

The purpose of Christ’s suffering is to cleanse the people of many nations from their sins. God is telling us that the nations and their kings will shut their mouths in silence, because they had misunderstood His suffering. But eventually they would comprehend their mistake at His second coming and come to understand the wonder of His sacrifice.

So, how would He suffer?

## V. The Rejection of God’s Servant

**Isaiah 53:1-3** – “Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm? 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. 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.”

**Matthew 21:42** – Then Jesus asked them, “Didn’t you ever read this in the Scriptures? ‘The stone that the builders **rejected** has now become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful to see.’ ” (NLT)

**Luke 9:22** – “ ‘The Son of Man must suffer many terrible things,’ he said. ‘He will be **rejected** by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead.’ ” (NLT)

**Acts 4:11-12** – “For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, ‘The stone that you builders **rejected** has now become the cornerstone.’ There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.” (NLT)

## VI. The Purpose for the Death of God’s Servant

**Isaiah 53:4-5** – “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! 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**.” (NLT)

**How did Jesus die?** He was pierced, crushed, beaten, and whipped, bearing our punishment and then went to hell for us. The wages of sin is death and the judgment for continuing in sinful rebellion is the hell of an eternal separation from God.

**1 Peter 2:24** – “Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by his wounds that you have been healed.” (TEV)

## VII. The Reason for the Death of God's Servant

**Isaiah 53:6-12** – “All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him **the sins of us all**. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.” (NLT)

**Why did Jesus have to die?** Only an innocent man, one who had never sinned could actually become the sacrificial lamb that God required. So, He died, the innocent for the guilty, because like sheep we strayed. We left God's path and chose our own independent way violating His holy Law-word. Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians:

**Eph. 2:1-3** – “You were once dead because of your failures and sins. You followed the ways of this present world and its spiritual ruler. This ruler continues to work in people who refuse to obey God. All of us once lived among these people, and followed the desires of our corrupt nature. We did what our corrupt desires and thoughts wanted us to do. So, because of our nature, we deserved God's anger just like everyone else.” (GW)

**Hebrews 12:2-3** – “Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God's throne. Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up.” (TEV)

The challenge we face today is one of refusing to become discouraged. Even though the nation we live in is under God's discipline and is being shaken by His judgment, we need to lift up our heads for our redemption draws near. Jesus is God's victorious Servant.

These are days when we need to separate ourselves from the pollution of the culture we live in, refuse to buy into the vain philosophies of this world system and prepare ourselves for Christ's coming. Truly, the best is yet to come!!!