

April 2, 2006 by Steve Brandon



He was Despised

Isaiah 52:13-53:3

1. His Exaltation (verse 13)
2. His Humiliation (verse 14)
3. His Proclamation (verse 15)
4. His Reception (verse 1)
5. His Unattraction (verse 2)
6. His Rejection (verse 3)

One of the marks of a healthy church is a genuine humility among its members. One of the ways that this will work itself out is in seeking the interest of others, and not merely your own. This is what Paul said in Philippians 2:3-4, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

As a pastor of a church, I do not believe that I am exempt from this command. With humility of mind, I need to look out for your interests, rather than my own interests. In many ways, this needs to be one of my chief characteristics, as a shepherd of the flock of God. The concern of the shepherd is for the sheep. Jesus said that the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

This isn't the easiest thing in the world to do. In fact, it's very difficult to do. Like you, my heart is full of pride. I see it. I'm praying to see it more, that I might be conformed to His image through repentance. One of the ways in which my pride manifests itself is that I tend to think that my ways are the best ways. I think that the church is best when it follows my advice. And yet, the church isn't about me. It isn't about Steve Brandon and his own will. The church is about Jesus Christ and His glory.

And so, this morning, I want to do something that is a bit humbling for me. It's acknowledging that my way is not the best. As most of you know, since the beginning of 2006, I have been attempting to preach through the entire Bible by the end of the year. I have distributed Bible reading plans to all of you and have encouraged you to make an effort to read through the Bible this year. Each week, as we have had the opportunity to preach, I have taken as my text, the previous week's reading. As a result, we have been going pretty fast through the Scriptures.

And yet, over the past several weeks, I have been in a discussion with Gordy Bell (one of our elders) about this approach. Without getting into all of the details, let me simply say that we have come to the conclusion that Rock Valley Bible Church should return to going through passages of Scripture a bit more slowly. Rather than waiting until 2007 to return to a verse-by-verse approach (as was the original plan), we will begin afresh this morning with a verse-by-verse exposition of a passage of Scripture.

For the next three weeks, (beginning today) we will be looking in depth at Isaiah 52 and Isaiah 53. I believe that such a passage is very timely for us as we approach Easter Sunday in a few short weeks. This passage will take us through (1) the life of Jesus, (2) the death of Jesus, and (3) the resurrection of Jesus. (And then, the week after Easter, we will begin a verse-by-verse study of Paul's epistle to the Colossians).

In speaking with Gordy, I know that such a change will be a breath of fresh air to some of you, who prefer a more in-depth exposition on Sunday mornings, rather than the overview that we have been doing in recent days. Perhaps such a change at this point in time disappoints you. If so, I simply ask you to embrace our plan going forward.

With that being said, let's consider our text this morning. The verses below are the last of four servant songs in Isaiah. You can find the others in chapters 42, 49, and 50.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Behold, My servant will prosper. He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see. And what they had not heard they will understand.

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 out 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 was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

As many of you know, I recently spent two weeks in Nepal, ministering to some of the churches there. One of the things that you are immediately impressed with as you fly into Nepal is the beauty of the Himalayan mountains to the north. They are impressive in their height. They are inspiring in their beauty. They are intimidating in their size. Tourists come from around the world to climb them.

Now, one of the mountain peaks towers above all the others: Mount Everest, whose peak is some 29,000 feet above sea level. It is easily the best known peak in Nepal. As the highest point in the globe, there is mystery and intrigue about this mountain. When people find out that I went to Nepal, they often will ask me if I saw Mount Everest. Unfortunately, I haven't seen Mount Everest, as it has been far beyond the peaks that I have seen.

This morning, as we open our Bibles to look into His word, we will get to see the Mount Everest of the Old Testament. [\[1\]](#) believe these words to be the highest and most glorious of all texts of the Old Testament, because this passage describes for us the Lord Jesus Christ as accurately as any text in the Old Testament, although written hundreds of years before His life. Furthermore, this passage is quoted in more locations in the New Testament than any other chapter in the Bible. I counted more than thirty New Testament references to this passage. Some have even called this passage, "The Gospel According to Isaiah."

We will have the opportunity this morning to trek up the mountain top together. In fact, our trek will take us three weeks. Throughout our journey together, there is one subject that will rivet our attention. This subject is identified in verse 13 (of chapter 52). The subject is identified as "My servant."

The identity of "this servant" has been a question that has been asked many times down through the ages. The prophets themselves, who wrote better than they knew, would think long and hard about the identity of this servant. In 1 Peter. 1:10-11, we read, "the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." In other words, the Old Testament prophets spent much time and energy attempting to figure out for themselves who exactly this servant was.

I remember seeing a great illustration of this passage of Scripture. I knew a man, who had amassed a huge collection of Bibles. He had all types of Bibles, many of them very old. I had the opportunity one time to look at a man's Bible collection. One of the most interesting of all his Bibles was a scroll of the prophet, Isaiah. The scroll was in very good shape, like a brand new Bible. However, the parchment around the 53rd chapter of Isaiah was wrinkled and tattered and worn. Obviously, its words had been the object of much study. I'm not quite sure who it was, but somebody was interested in knowing and understanding exactly who this text was referring to.

So, who is this servant? Should you ask a Jewish Rabbi today who this portion of Scripture is referring to, he would most likely tell you that the servant is Israel, God's people. If the Rabbi knew his scriptures, he might take you back in the book of Isaiah and show you several instances in which "my servant" refers to Israel. For instance, in chapter 44, verses 1 and 2, we read, "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb who will help you, "Do not fear, O Jacob My servant." Furthermore, the Rabbi might return to Isaiah 53 and speak about the sufferings that this servant experiences. He then might explain how Israel has always suffered down through the ages. The Egyptians enslaved Israel against their will (Exodus 1). Those in Esther's day sought to rid the world of the Jewish people (Esther 3:8-9). The Holocaust of a generation ago is also demonstrable of the hatred that many have for the Jewish people.

All of this might sound convincing, but, the difficulty of such an interpretation is that the sufferings of Israel don't quite match up with the sufferings given to us in Isaiah 53. First of all, 1. The suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is innocent. Isaiah 53:9 says that "He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth." But, this doesn't square with Isaiah's own view of the nation of Israel, whom he called, a "sinful nation, ... weighed down with iniquity" (Is. 1:4). Second, the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 was a willing sacrifice. We see this in chapter 53, verse 12, "He poured out Himself to death." He was a willing sufferer. This has never been the case with Israel. Furthermore, the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 offered himself as an atonement. In other words, this servant took away the sins of others through his suffering. In verse 4, we read that he bore our griefs. In verse 5, we read that he was crushed for our iniquities. In verse 6 we see that the iniquity of us all has fallen on him. None of these things are true of Israel in the least degree. These are only a few objections, among many others that might easily show that this servant couldn't be the nation of Israel. And the Rabbis know this. They will search frantically for another solution. Perhaps they were the ones who studying the scroll that is now stored in this man's Bible collection.

Another suggestion is that this servant is referring to Isaiah, himself. And yet, that meets with the same difficulties. Isaiah wasn't innocent. When he stood before the Lord, he declared himself to be "a man of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5). Neither was Isaiah's sufferings in any way for the sins of others. Isaiah would never have claimed to bear our griefs. Isaiah would never say that it was for our iniquities that he was crushed.

And so, we ask the age old question. Who is this servant? Fortunately, the Bible has an answer for us. We aren't left alone in the dark. Perhaps you remember the story that Dr. Luke gives to us in Acts, chapter 8 of the Ethiopian eunuch, who was reading this very passage as he was sitting in his chariot, on the way back to Ethiopia (Acts 8:28). The Spirit told Philip to "Go up and join this chariot" (Acts 8:29). And so, "Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'" (Acts 8:30). The eunuch replied, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:31). And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Luke tells us that the passage which this eunuch was reading came from Isaiah 53:7-8. "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 out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?" Having read this passage to Philip, the eunuch asked him, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" (Acts 8:34). Then, "Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). This is my aim this morning: I want to preach Jesus to you from this Scripture.

Over the next few weeks as we walk through this passage, you can quickly discern that Isaiah is speaking about Jesus, the Messiah. It doesn't take rocket science to see this. In verses 13-15, we see His exaltation and humiliation. In the first three verses of chapter 53, we see His rejection. In verses 4-6, we see His crucifixion. In verses 7-9, we see His death and burial. In verses 10-12, we see His resurrection. As such, they are perfect verses for us to consider at as we anticipate the coming of Easter, when we celebrate with particular focus upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Let's begin in chapter 52, verse 13, with ...

1. His Exaltation (verse 13)

"Behold, My servant will prosper. He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted." (verse 13).

This verse begins with the end of the life of Jesus. After He endured the cross and was raised from the dead, Jesus Christ was "highly exalted." God "bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). So exalted is Jesus Christ, that there will be a day when "every knee will bow ... and ... every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:10-11). This is what verse 13 is speaking about.

The servant will "prosper." In other words, He will have success. What He sets out to accomplish will actually come to pass. We know that this took place in the life of Jesus. Toward the end of His life, Jesus prayed to the Father, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4). And that work, of course, was to condescend from the glories of heaven to take on human flesh, live a perfect life, and eventually die as an atoning sacrifice on the cross. That's what Jesus accomplished. The last thing that He said before He died signified His accomplishing of all the work set out for Him. "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Jesus Christ descended from intimate fellowship with God, the Father, to the lonely darkness of a cold tomb, only then to be exalted once again. And today, Jesus Christ is "high and lifted up and greatly exalted." In fact, should we enter heaven today, there is one thing that would immediately grab our attention: Jesus Christ. Just as the blazing sun immediately gets your attention when you walk outside from a darkened room, so does the glory of Jesus Christ shine in heaven. The events that we read of heaven are such that the focus of everyone's attention there is the Lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:9).

Isaiah has already used these words, "high and lifted up" back in chapter 6. Perhaps you remember the scene. It took place in the year of King Uzziah's death. Isaiah said, ...

Isaiah 6:1-4

... I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." The foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke."

It is a glorious scene of heaven. The Lord on the throne, "high and lifted up." In the 12th chapter of John's epistle, we are informed that this scene describes for us none other than the glory of Jesus Christ, the exalted One. This is the exaltation of Jesus. Let's look now at ...

2. His Humiliation (verse 14)

"Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men" (verse 14).

Of course, you know that the life of Jesus came to an end upon a Roman cross. As I have told you before, the cross was invented as a tool by which death might come to the victim as slowly and painfully as possible. It would often take days for people to die upon a cross, experiencing excruciating pain during this whole time. Surely during this time, the dehydration, the sweat, the blood, the muscle cramps, the exposure, would all disfigure the dying. I'm sure that many who were crucified were difficult to recognize. This happened to Jesus. Verse 14 tells us that the appearance of Jesus "was marred more than any man." This is reasonable to expect when we think about what Jesus endured upon the cross.

Before Jesus was actually crucified, He was beaten by Roman soldiers. Listen to the testimony that Matthew gives.

Matthew 27:27-30

The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a

reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.

Mark adds that these soldiers "kept beating His head with a reed" (Mark 15:19). Any beatings that came upon the top of His head would have worked to press the crown of thorns more deeply into His skull, causing great pain and blood to drip down his face. Furthermore, it is very possible that Jesus was struck not only on the back of his head, but he very well may have been struck in the face as well. Have you ever seen the appearance of a heavyweight boxer after going 15 rounds? Often, his eyes are puffy and his face is bruised. Such may very well have been the case with Jesus. Add to that the fact that the stress of what Jesus knew that He would suffer caused His face to drip with bloody sweat (Luke 22:44), and it's not unreasonable at all to imagine that Jesus was beyond recognition as He hung upon the cross.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was so disfigured, Isaiah had so predicted that this would happen. It was all a part of (2) His Humiliation (verse 14). Let's now look at ...

3. His Proclamation (verse 15)

"Thus He will sprinkle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand."

The term translated, "sprinkle" is often used to describe the activity of the priest with a sacrifice. We read in the Old Testament of the priest, who sprinkles the blood of the sacrifice on the people (Lev. 14:7) or on the priests (Ex. 29:21) or on the altar (Lev. 5:9) or on the mercy seat (Lev. 16:14). Always in mind is the picture of cleansing with the blood of bulls or goats. As such, it gives a picture of what the blood of Christ will do. It is His blood that has sprinkled our consciences to make them clean. Is it the blood of Jesus that purifies us from our sin.

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Peter speaks about being sprinkled by the blood of Jesus in his epistle, when he writes to those "who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood" (1 Pet. 1:1b-2). This is picturing the cleansing, sanctifying work of the blood of Christ.

Notice that the promise of His sprinkling in Isaiah is for "many nations." Even here in the Old Testament, we see the anticipation of the work of the Messiah extending throughout the world. It has gone further than merely the nation of Israel. In fact, this global proclamation of the gospel is celebrated in heaven. When we hear of Jesus Christ, the slain Lamb, worshiped in heaven, note how world-wide they are: "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). In other words, the blood of Jesus Christ will be proclaimed to "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). It will reach beyond Israel. It will reach beyond England. It will reach beyond the United States of America. Wherever there is a tribe, there will be a representative of that tribe in heaven, giving praise to Jesus Christ. Wherever there is a tongue, there will be a representative of that tongue in heaven, giving praise to Jesus Christ. Wherever there is a people, there will be a representative of that people in heaven, giving praise to Jesus Christ. Wherever there is a nation, there will be a representative of that nation in heaven, giving praise to Jesus Christ.

Isaiah anticipated this when he said that the Messiah would "sprinkle many nations." And in these nations, the leaders will take note of what is happening. We read that "kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand" (verse 15). I believe that these words are talking about the effect that the reception of the gospel will have upon nations. The kings and governmental rulers will take note and see what is happening among their people, though they haven't been told directly.

For instance, take the country of Nepal. Being a Hindu kingdom, there is great ignorance about Christ and His church. By current statistics, the number of Christians in Nepal hovers somewhere near 2%. And yet, the governmental leaders are beginning to notice the Christians. Recently, many of the prominent leaders of the Christian church were summoned to come and speak with the governmental authorities. The government was seeking to find out what they could about Christianity, that has been growing in their nation.

I heard the story from one man, who was summoned in to speak with the authorities. He told me of his conversation with the government official. He said that he spoke with him for a bit over an hour. This governmental official told him that he has been assigned the job of understanding Christianity, because it is quickly becoming a more and more influential sector of society. This man was asking fundamental questions like, ...

"What is Christianity?"
"How do you become a Christian?"
"What are Christians trying to do?"
"Why are they so aggressively trying to spread their religion?"
"How do Christians view the government?"
"Where is your funding coming from?"

The reason why the government was asking these questions is because the message of the Messiah has been sprinkled in Nepal. It's not that the gospel has flooded Nepal. The gospel has sprinkled Nepal, and the king has taken note, because he has seen and understood that Christians are different than others in the land. Such will be (3) His Proclamation (verse 15). In chapter 53:1, we see, ...

4. His Reception (verse 1)

"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" (verse 1).

This is a rhetorical question that lends a discouraging answer. It's not many who has believed the message. It's not many who received him. In John's prologue we read that Jesus "came into His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). What an amazing thing this is! The one who was exalted above all others, the one who will be revealed to all nations, ... was not received by His own people.

The picture given in verse 15 is a great picture. His life will "sprinkle" many nations. In other words, His life will have an effect. And yet, the effect won't be great. When summertime comes, our children love to run through the sprinkler. There is a difference in running through the sprinkler and swimming in the pool. The one gets you a little wet. The other gets you soaked. When the saving message of the Messiah is proclaimed, it won't flood all of the nations of the earth. Verse 15 (of chapter 52) says that His influence will "sprinkle many nations" (52:15). [\[2\]](#)

Though many people will not receive the message, there will be the few who get wet. Though the gospel will be embraced in every nation, it will not be embraced **entirely in** every nation. Jesus, Himself, said that "they will come from east and west and from north and south ... [to] recline at the table in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29). But, it's not the many who will be gathered. Jesus said that it's the few who will be saved (Matt. 7:14).

Lest you think this number to be minimal, take heart that there will be enough gospel light for the rulers of nations to take notice. Even two percent of the population is enough to make their impact known. The question rightly comes, then, "Why are there so few?" The answer comes in verse 2. There are few because of ...

5. His Unattraction (verse 2)

"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."

In other words, when the Messiah would come, He would come with an unassuming presence. People didn't look upon Jesus and instantly fall at His feet and worship Him because of His awe-inspiring appearance. He didn't stand as King Saul did, "a choice and handsome man ... from his shoulders and up, ... taller than any of the people" (1 Sam. 9:2). He wouldn't have been selected first as a teammate on the playground. The girls at school wouldn't have voted him as "Mr. Handsome."

When you read the gospel accounts, very little is written about His physical appearance. I believe that this is the case, because there was nothing particularly impressive about his physical appearance. Now, I don't believe that Jesus was ugly and repulsive. Because He was sinless, certainly, His physical appearance certainly didn't turn people away in horror. But, there was nothing exceptionally beautiful about the Messiah. I believe that Jesus mixed in well with the "hoi polloi." He was a common man. "He had not stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (verse 2).

Though silent concerning His appearance, the gospel accounts are full of the disrespect that Jesus received. In verse 2 we read that Jesus was "like a root out of parched ground." In other words, Jesus blossomed in land that was unfavorable for crops to grow. Yesterday in our home, my son was reading something about the Badlands of South Dakota. He asked why they were called the Badlands. Do you know why? "Badlands got its name from fur trappers who came to this area in the early 1800's. They called the area badlands, because of the complete lack of drinkable water in the region." [\[3\]](#) As a result, nothing much grows in this area.

Jesus grew up in a land that for all intents and purposes could have been called the "Spiritual Badlands." He was raised in the city of Nazareth, which had a poor reputation. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:45) was Nathanael's initial reaction when he heard Philip say that Jesus, the Nazarene" was the Messiah. When Jesus first preached in His hometown, you can get a feel for why Nazareth had such a reputation. Initially, the people were a bit surprised at His preaching ability. "All were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, 'Is this not Joseph's son?'" (Luke 4:22). Those who knew Jesus from His childhood would never have guessed that Jesus could speak such elegant and gracious words. But, soon afterwards, Jesus was rejected by those in His hometown. They tried to kill Him! This led Jesus to say, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household" (Matt. 13:57). Those who knew Jesus best and could have been able to hold Him up as their local hero, rejected Him. I believe that this is what Isaiah was getting at in verse 2 when he said that the Messiah would be "like a root out of parched ground" (Is. 53:2). The Messiah would grow up in a most unlikely place--the city of Nazareth.

It is absolutely amazing at how well this text describes Jesus. It speaks about (1) His Exaltation; (2) His Humiliation; (3) His Proclamation; (4) His Reception; (5) His Unattraction. And now, finally in verse 3, ...

6. His Rejection (verse 3)

"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."

Verse 2 speaks about the appearance of Jesus. Verse 3 speaks about the response of the people to Jesus. And it's not good. In fact, it's terrible.

While travelling recently, I was reminded again of the wickedness of the caste system that exists in Hinduism. Depending upon the family into which you are born, you are born into a certain caste. If you are born into a high caste, things are well with you. You can get the education.

You can get the jobs. You can be respected. But, if you are born into a low caste, things are not well with you. You are considered to be a second-class citizen. Certain opportunities are simply not available to you. The upper caste will look down upon you and will fear to even touch you, lest they become unclean and need to be ceremonial washed.

When Jesus walked the earth, he was despised by men. Twice in verse 3 (at the beginning and at the end), Isaiah says that the Messiah will be "despised." He will be treated as a second class citizen. We know that this was true of Jesus. The Pharisees accused Jesus of being "born of fornication" because He was born out of wedlock (John 8:41). The Pharisees accused Jesus of being a "Samaritan," who was like a low caste person in the days of Jesus (John 8:48). The Samaritans were utterly hated by the Jews. The Pharisees accused Jesus of having a "demon" (John 8:48). Jesus demonstrated how absurd such an accusation was, "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?" (Matt. 12:26). But, their hearts were so hard that they couldn't hear the voice of reason. Furthermore, they called Jesus "a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of ... sinners" (Matt. 11:19). The "high caste" of Jesus day despised Him, as a wretched, sinful, dirty tax collector, even though none of this was true.

As a result of this, the people didn't esteem Him (verse 3). But, rather, Jesus was "forsaken of men" (verse 3). He didn't get the respect that the second person of the Trinity deserved. I know that Jesus was Almighty God. But, in His humanness, the name calling and the rejection that He experienced would be difficult to take. Have you ever been accused of something that just wasn't true? A story about you fabricated from somewhere? Let me tell you, it hurts deep into the soul.

Surely, Jesus experienced this as well. Though He was perfect God, lies about Him abounded. People ridiculed Him and hated Him and deserted Him. He was "a man of sorrows," who knew what rejection was like. He was "acquainted with grief," especially the grief of false accusation. Ultimately, it was the false accusations against Jesus that led to His death at Calvary. Rather than defending Himself, Jesus kept His mouth shut (verse 7).

I can barely imagine the grief that Jesus must have felt when He healed ten lepers, and only one of them would return to give thanks (Luke 17:11-19). Surely it was difficult when He feed thousands of people, only to have almost all of them desert Him when they heard Him preach (John 6:66). When so many were leaving, He asked Peter, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" (John 6:67). It must have been hard when His close friend betrayed Him with a kiss (Matthew 26:49), and when His disciples fell asleep in His hour of greatest need (Matt. 26:40). Try to imagine the anguish of soul when His other eleven all fled from Him, though they had all pledged to be faithful to Him, even unto death (Matt. 26:35). The pain of rejection was great! Surely, it hurt when the Romans were beating upon His body, preparing to nail Him to the cross. But such pains may have been eclipsed by the pain of rejection that Jesus faced.

The picture that Isaiah paints of Jesus is terrifying. He says that He was "like one from whom men hide their face" (verse 3). Perhaps you can imagine with me, a man who is right now fighting in Iraq. In the course of his duty, he happened to be near a suicide bomber, who drove his car up to a checkpoint and then set off a bomb in the car. You can imagine this man's face being exposed to the explosion, causing third degree burns upon his face. He returns to America and undergoes several rounds of plastic surgery, attempting to restore his face to something that is close to what his face was before the explosion. However, the scarring was too bad. And his appearance was forever marred.

Forever, this man will be exposed to the stares of strangers, who will gaze upon the remains of what can hardly be called a face. Children will see him, and run away in fear, screaming and crying to their mothers, as if they had just seen Frankenstein. Even some adults wouldn't be able to handle his appearance without a wince and a looking away. Such an existence would be terrible, wouldn't it? That's a bit similar to the experience of Jesus. He was "like one from whom men hide their face." He was shunned and rejected by His society.

This was the life of Jesus. "He was despised." But, here's the thing. Apart from being despised and hated and rejected and crucified, Jesus would never have been able to save us. It's the transgression of the Jewish people to reject their Messiah, that has brought salvation to the Gentiles (Romans 11:11).

Next week we will spend some time looking at how Jesus provides the way of salvation. To summarize, we can say that He was our substitute. The wrath of God that we deserved fell upon Him, that we might know the grace of God. Verse 5 tells us that "He was pierced through for our transgressions." In other words, Jesus was crucified (i.e. pierced) for the sin that we committed. As a result, "The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (verse 6). With our sin falling on Him, we get His righteousness (see 2 Cor. 5:21) and the undeserved glory that only He deserved!

Have you believed our message?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 2, 2006 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] In preparing my message, I listened to two preachers who both identified this prophecy in Isaiah as "Mount Everest." So, this illustration is hardly original with me. The first preacher was Steve Lawson used this illustration in preaching to his congregation of Christ Fellowship Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama, during the evening service on September 14, 2004. The second preacher was S. Lewis Johnson, who used this illustration while preaching to his congregation of Believers Chapel in Dallas Texas in a message entitled, "The Startling Christ" (date unknown to me).

[2] Though Isaiah predicts only "sprinklings," let it be clear that there will be times of great downpour, when the light of the gospel penetrates

nations in unbelievable ways. For instance, here in America, there were several Great Awakenings. The first came in the 1740's. You can read about the great transformation in people in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. Later awakenings came in the early 1800's, especially in Kentucky.

[3] This quote was found at <http://www.outdoorplaces.com/Destination/USNP/SDBadlan/blnp1.htm>