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Isaiah 53 - Part I

The Arm of Yahweh

Luke 9:23: *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. These words were recorded by Luke as having been spoken right after Peter identified Jesus as the anointed of the God (verse 20). Paul stated in **1Corinthians 1:17-18:** *17. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel ^(g2097): not with wisdom of words ^(g3056), lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. 18. For the preaching ^(g3056) of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (gospel = good news ^{g2098}; to evangelize is to preach the good news of the cross)**

The proper meaning of *logos* ^(g3056) from Thayer: *a word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea*. The root (*eu* ^{g2098} & *angellos* ^{g32}) of *euangelizo* ^(g2097) is *good message*. Our English word is derived from French.

Here are the same verses from the LITV Bible: *17. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to announce the gospel, not in wisdom of words ^(g3056), lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect. 18. For the Word ^(g3056) of the cross is foolishness to those being lost, but to us being saved, it is the power of God.*

When the idea taught by Paul is connected to the words of Jesus, believers are admonished to daily consider the concept of the cross. Why would any idea of the cross be foolishness to some by not others? Paul identified two groups of people, which in his day encompassed all peoples: **1Corinthians 1:22-24:** *22. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The two groups - Jews and Greeks, and which today can be related to Christian and non-Christian, and also the source of those who believe the gospel (verse 24). Why is the cross a stumbling block to the Jews? The Jews could not accept that the expected Messiah would die on the cross: *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross... If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.* (Mt 27:39-43).*

Isaiah 53:1: *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* John, writing many years after the cross, quotes this verse, applying it to Christ (Jn 12:37-38). Isaiah, writing hundreds of years before the cross, asks, *Who has believed what we have heard?* Isaiah gives a reason for his question in the previous chapter: **Isaiah 52:13-15:** *13. Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. 14. Like as many were astonished at thee (his visage ^(h4758) was so marred more than any man, and his form ^(h8389) more than the sons of men), 15. so shall he sprinkle (Metaphor = teach, cf Eze 36:25) many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand (ASV).*

In verse 14 - his outward appearance and form were marred more than any man: No doubt that his appearance on the cross after the torture and abuse left him physically marred, even unrecognizable. Mankind primarily applies scripture to the outward and literal. Before Constantine, the church pictured to itself, Jesus as a man as being

repulsive in appearance; but after the time of Constantine as beautiful in appearance, as depicted in the many paintings and statues you see today. Jesus' earthly birth was among the working class and of humble origin. He did not come with earthly wealth and dressed in garments of the rich. However, he is also spiritually marred by the wisdom and doctrines of men, then and today, as to be unrecognizable. But, according to verse 15, there will be some who will consider and understand things that they were never told, just as there were some Jews and many Gentiles who came to see the Savior differently than did the Jews of that day.

Isaiah expands the idea presented in chapter 52: **Isaiah 53:2-3**: *2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant ^(h3126), and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form ^(h8389) nor comeliness (majesty, honor, cf Ps 8:5); and when we shall see him, there is no beauty ^(h4758) outward appearance) that we should desire him. 3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. To the Jews, Jesus appeared as an ordinary man, a person of low esteem and a humble beginning. In their estimation, he was not rich and famous, a man to be exalted as the Messiah and spiritual leader of Israel; Nor did what Jesus teach agree with those of the church in that day. I find interesting in today's world, the practice of many Christians, as well as non-Christians, the worshiping of the rich and famous and ignoring the common.*

The meaning of the Hebrew word (*yonek* ^{h3126}) rendered tender plant, is a *twig (of a felled tree)*. Cut down a tree, and often a new tree will sprout out of the stump. Think of your understanding of how you see, or have seen the Son of God, as being represented by a mighty oak in your mind (cf Lk 3:9). Now, God reveals to you that your understanding is flawed - i.e. God cuts down that tree, and begins to give you a new understanding, something maybe not so popular, but which helps you understand better and more deeply, the purpose of the cross.

Isaiah 53:4-5: *4. Surely he hath borne ^(h5375) our griefs, and carried ^(h5445) our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5. But he was wounded for our transgressions (= rebellion), he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. How do you understand the first part of verse 4? Here it is from a couple of other versions:*

Living Bible: *But he was wounded and bruised for our sins.*

New International Reader's Version: *He suffered the things we should have suffered. He took on himself the pain that should have been ours.*

Bible in Basic English: *But it was our pain he took, and our diseases were put on him:*

The concept that God put upon Jesus our personal experiences of diseases, sin, etc, is taught by many today. However, verse 4 is explained: **Matthew 8:16-17**: *16. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: 17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Jesus did not take the people's personal diseases, sins, etc on himself - he lifted them up ^(h5375) from the people, and carried them away ^(h5445). This idea fits with his first sermon: **Luke 4:18**: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised*. It is the preaching of the cross which will deliver people out of the bondage of sin.*

What about in our day? It is obvious that religious leaders disagree on how to view the Son of God. What should we do? **2Timothy 2:15**: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* Consider the things you hear, but let God be your guide always. Amen!