

Prophecy Concerning Christ's Suffering and Glorification (Isaiah 53:10-12)

Gary McDade

The theme "Lead Me To Calvary" is an urgent theme for our time. Those scattered around the world claiming to be "Christians" are divided into almost innumerable groups with various names, creeds, and purposes while, for example, the religion of Islam has eclipsed the billion mark in numbers of adherents. Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb wrote in their introduction to *Answering Islam*, "Islam has rapidly grown to become the second largest religion in the world, with over one billion adherents – nearly one in every five persons on earth. In the United States there are presently more Muslims than Methodists. The most rapid growth is in the African American community" (p. 11). (Their book was written in 2002).

How effective do you think, given our current political environment, any non-Muslim government would be in implementing the five suggestions offered by Robert Spencer, *New York Times* bestselling author, in his book *The Truth about Muhammad, Founder of the World's Most Intolerant Religion*?

- *Stop insisting that Islam is a religion of peace.*
- *Initiate a full-scale Manhattan Project to find new energy sources.*
- *Make Western aid contingent upon renunciation of the jihad ideology.*
- *Call upon American Muslim advocacy groups to work against the jihad ideology.*
- *Revise immigration policies with the jihad ideology in view (pp. 192-194).*

While these seem like excellent political suggestions, how effective do you think any non-Muslim government would be in implementing even any *one* of them? We share the sentiment offered by Dave Miller in the conclusion of his in-depth work *The Quran Unveiled, Islam and New Testament Christianity in Conflict* when he wrote, "The single most effective tool in responding to Islam, even in its more sinister aspects, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (p. 257). It is going to take some very serious and formidable power to overcome the destructive effects of those who are absorbed in the religion of Islam, other world religions, and a divided "Christianity." Thankfully, such power readily is available worldwide; it is the gospel of Christ. Confidently, we reaffirm as did the apostle Paul, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17).

A study of prophecy relating to the theme of "Lead Me To Calvary" equally is an urgent theme for our time. The cause of Christ has been betrayed by many in the so-called "Christian" schools associated with churches of Christ. At a time when the

restoration plea of “speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent” from scriptures like Deuteronomy 29:29 and I Peter 4:11 is so desperately needed to call American society and the nations of the world back to the Bible as our sole rule of faith and practice, a thing for which churches of Christ have historically been known, “Christian” schools have marshaled their scholars together and written a one volume commentary on the whole Bible which denies prophetic prophecy concerning Christ and the church of Christ! The depth of the betrayal is so outlandish a quotation on the subject from the book in question is in order. An introductory section called “Old Testament Prophecy” written by John T. Willis from Abilene Christian University reads,

There is no unequivocal specific prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ and/or the church in the Old Testament (p. 66).

In Wayne Jackson’s review of this 8 ½ by 11 page size, 1,117 page book from ACU he says, “Contrast this with Professor J. Barton Payne’s calculation that there are 8,352 prophetic passages in the Bible (1973, 632ff.; 675)” (*Clouds Without Water*, p. 7). Yet, these self-styled scholars aver, “There is no unequivocal specific prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ and/or the church in the Old Testament.” Such a statement not only denies Christ in the Old Testament, look at what the writer of Hebrews affirmed in the New Testament concerning Christ, “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7).

A study of prophetic prophecy is one of the many areas undergirding the inspiration of the Bible. For example, in a discussion of the subject in Dave Miller’s *The Quran Unveiled* he lists the following categories as supportive of the inspiration of the Bible: Absence of Contradiction; Historical, Geographical, and Topographical Accuracy; Predictive Prophecy; Scientific Foreknowledge; Internal Unity; and Stylistic Commonalities (pp. 274-282). In Wayne Jackson’s new book, *The Bible on Trial*, he defends the inspiration of the Bible on many grounds including the history contained in the Bible; the unity of the scriptures; the absence of contradiction in the Bible; the silence of the scriptures—“in areas where human curiosity clamors for information”; the apostles; the miracles of the Bible; the integrity of the text; and the flawless accuracy of the Bible in general and as it relates to the prophecy it contains in particular (cf. pp. 26-48). Now, why would 49 men and 3 women write and contribute articles on books of the Bible signing on to the philosophy of prophecy described in the mantra, “There is no unequivocal specific prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ and/or the church in the Old Testament”? The schools these people are from need to be exposed because they are training our young men and women who may be leaders in local congregations one day and men who may occupy pulpits in the churches of Christ. Parents need to be admonished not to send our young people to these schools. Do you not know, with professors who agree with the philosophy of prophecy stated in the introduction of the book in question enough to contribute to its success, young people who have been taught to honor the value of Bible prophecy may be robbed of their faith? The

contributors who teach in what many believe to be Christian schools and the schools they represent are:

Abilene Christian University

Rodney Ashlock, Kenneth L. Cukrowski, Everett Ferguson, Mark W. Hamilton, Preston Harper, Nathaniel D. Lollar, Curt Niccum, Glenn Pemberton, Tim Sensing, Nancy W. Shankle, Kelly Shearon, David Skelton, Gregory Straughn, James W. Thompson, Stephen Weathers, Christian W. Willerton, John T. Willis, and Wendell Willis.

Amridge University

Paul L. Watson.

Harding University

Paul Pollard.

Harding Graduate School of Religion

Allen Black, Phillip E. McMillion, and Richard E. Oster, Jr.

Lipscomb University

Mark Black and Philip G. Camp.

Lubbock Christian University

Brandon L. Frendenburg, Jesse C. Long, Jr., Mark Sneed, and Charles B. Stephenson.

Oklahoma Christian University

Richard Wright.

Pepperdine University

R. Christopher Heard, Ira J. Jolivet, Jr., Rick R. Marrs, and Thomas H. Olbricht.

Rochester College

Gregory M. Stevenson. (*The Transforming Word*, (2009) Mark W. Hamilton, gen. ed. ACU Press, pp. iii-iv).

A good question to ask is “why would any Christian parent want to run the risk of seeing their child have his or her faith damaged or destroyed by sending him or her to one of these schools?” Should one of these professors rob someone’s child of his or her faith in the predictive prophecy of the Bible, and mind you they will, surely the question that will echo down the hollow halls of hell for eternity is “why did I send my child to that school?”

Perhaps the question upon reading, “There is no unequivocal specific prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ and/or the church in the Old Testament,” is “how do the authors explain New Testament teaching on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies?” And, the answer is given in the next sentence from page 66 of *The Transforming Word*. Willis wrote, “New Testament speakers reinterpreted and reapplied Old Testament texts to Christ and/or the church” (p. 66). We are asked to believe that Old Testament statements were not prophecies about Christ and/or the church, so New Testament speakers, including our Lord, manipulated through reinterpretation and

reapplication the Old Testament scriptures applying them to their current situation! This is the most absurd idea I have encountered in 36 years of preaching.

Now, let's notice the specific assignment "Prophecy Concerning Christ's Suffering and Glorification" from Isaiah 53:10-12. It will be necessary to first answer the critics showing positively that this is a predictive Messianic prophecy about the vicarious death of Jesus Christ. Then, second, we will explain that not only did Jesus Christ die *for* us he died *instead* of us – this is what *vicarious* means. And, third, we will discuss how we as Christians must make this truth known to the world in order to "lead the lost to Calvary" ultimately resulting in the glorification of Christ.

Isaiah 53 is outlined in our study of the theme "Lead Me To Calvary" as follows:

Outline of Isaiah 53

- I. Prophecy Concerning Christ's Life, vv. 1-3.
- II. Prophecy Concerning Christ's Death, vv. 4-8.
- III. Prophecy Concerning Christ's Grave, v. 9.
- IV. Prophecy Concerning Christ's Suffering and Glorification, vv. 10-12.

Isaiah is known as the Messianic Prophet because of the many predictive prophecies concerning Christ contained in his work. Chapter 53 stages a battleground for the defense of the prophetic ministry of this great prophet of God, and unfortunately, as observed earlier, it may be that our greatest challenge in this connection is coming from within the Lord's church today. The warning Paul gave to the elders from Ephesus remains valid today when he said to them, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.* Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31, emphasis added).

Answering the Critics

The eighth century B.C. prophet Isaiah wrote that God was "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). Ironically, critics of predictive prophecy who have banded together to write the one volume commentary published by Abilene Christian University titled *The Transforming Word* do not specifically deny the inspiration of the Bible, they simply deny that the inspiration of the Bible includes the concept of predictive prophecy! This is why they deny that from 740 to 700 B.C. Isaiah wrote the sixty-six chapters traditionally attributed to him. Their denial, penned by John T. Willis who wrote the material on Isaiah (pp. 533-576), clearly is stated in the opening sentence of the introductory remarks. He said, "The book of Isaiah contains materials originating over four centuries" (p. 533). Observe the position is that it did not all originate in the eighth century B.C., but it "originated over four centuries." Now, since Isaiah did not live "over four centuries" they obviously could

not believe a man named Isaiah actually wrote the entirety of the book of Isaiah. Instead of one man, Isaiah, being the author, they speak of “the book’s composer” (p. 533). In fact, Willis, and those who contributed to the book—for not a single one of the other 51 contributors has risen up to challenge his position on any of this—are standing by the view that “the book’s composer uses a variety of specific events and God’s message derived from them to present relevant truths to his contemporaries in Jerusalem at the end of the fifth century BCE” (p. 533).

In the nineteenth century critics of the Bible sought to break up the book of Isaiah dividing it into two sections (as the movement grew others sought to divide the book into three sections). They would write about Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah, meaning second Isaiah. The shift of subject matter from Assyrian oppression to Babylonian captivity from chapter 39 to 40 was selected as the breaking point between the supposed two Isaiahs. Present day Bible critics, who have cursed the earth with their one volume commentary printed by ACU Press, have taken the old position a step further by denying Isaiah wrote any of the book but that he had disciples who received his messages orally and later wrote them down. Willis wrote,

Approximately 160 years separate the setting of Isaiah 1-39 (742-701 BCE) from that of Isaiah 40-55 (about 540 BCE), during which time disciples of Isaiah and/or advocates of his messages preserved, deleted, modified, rearranged, and expanded them in chapters 1-39 orally for application in new situations; later, the composer/s of chapters 40-55 attached their oracles to chapters 1-39. Many earlier and some contemporary scholars see great incoherence between these two sections (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 41-55), while several contemporary scholars find coherence throughout the book (Seitz, “Isaiah 40-66,” 309-21, 327-30). This commentary follows the latter approach (p. 558). [Note also that Willis only finds “coherent” material in the book of Isaiah not consistent authorship.]

In the gospel of John, Jesus said, “The scripture cannot be broken” (Jn. 10:35b). As shown earlier by citing Hebrews 10:7, these critics cannot deny Christ in the Old Testament without denying him in the New Testament because Jesus Christ referred to the book of Isaiah and instead of acknowledging a “composer/s” attributed the book to the man Isaiah himself. Not only did Jesus on occasion refer to what Isaiah said (e.g., Mt. 13:14—here Jesus attributed the words not to supposed “disciples” of Isaiah but rather to the man Isaiah himself!) but he also said with emphasis, “Well did Isaiah prophecy of you, saying” (Mt. 15:7; Mk. 7:6). And, the inspired writer Luke attributed the words that are in the book of Isaiah to the prophet Isaiah, “As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Lk. 3:4). So, the words that appear in the book of Isaiah are not words “modified, rearranged, and expanded” from Isaiah by his “disciples” but are the actual words of the prophet Isaiah himself. Further, note that the passage cited by Luke is from Isaiah 40 at verse 3, the

supposed second section of Isaiah said to be written 160 years after Isaiah died, but Luke does not believe that; he attributed the words written there to Isaiah, and so does everyone who believes the Bible.

Although it apparently means nothing to those who hold to the dual (or triple) authorship of Isaiah error, the apostle John links the two sections together and attributes both sections to one author, Isaiah. In John 12:37-41 we read, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? [From Isaiah 53:1, the critic's second section.] Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. [From Isaiah 6:9-10, the critic's first section.] These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." Both of these sections are attributed to one and the same Isaiah by an inspired apostle, which makes it impossible to discredit Isaiah without at the same time discrediting the apostle John.

As Willis gets into the text of Isaiah he rejects the prophecy in chapter 2 referring to the establishment of the church corresponding to Acts 2 (p. 535). He denies the virgin birth of Christ in chapter 7 verse 14—foolishly attributing the prophecy to Hezekiah, who was not virgin born (p. 537). He wrote, "The young woman does not refer to Mary (see Motyer 84-87). Isaiah declares: *Look, the young woman is with child* (NRSV, Masoretic text) *and will give birth to a son* (not twins or a daughter) *and will call him Immanuel* [with us (Judeans) is God, so we have nothing to fear]; *baby Immanuel will eat curds and honey* (when his mother weans him, the only food available; verses 21-22); but before little Immanuel *knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good* (NRSV) *food, the land of the two kings* (Rezin and Pekah) *you* (the singular pronoun refers to Ahaz) *dread will be laid waste*" (p. 537). The most significant statement in this quotation is "the young woman does not refer to Mary."

The Hebrew word *almah* in the text refers not to just a "young woman" but to the specific purity of a certain "young woman" who is a virgin. Remember "the Lord himself shall give you a sign." What kind of a "sign" would it be for an ordinary "young woman" to have a son? Young women have been doing that from the creation of the world! Edward J. Young, a conservative scholar whom the people who wrote for *The Transforming Word* commentary obviously have rejected, points out that the word "Behold" introducing the sign Isaiah spoke to Ahaz about "is employed in Scripture to announce a birth of unusual importance and significance" (*The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 1, p. 284). This is far beyond eliminating the birth of "twins or a daughter" from consideration. In fact, the ACU commentary is so far afield from the meaning of the text when it gives the meaning of Immanuel in bracketed comments "[with us (Judeans) is God, so we have nothing to fear]" that it removes the possibility that Immanuel is even an individual person! In his attempt to remove the Divine hand of the Living God from the prophecy where Immanuel refers to Jesus Christ and the young woman to the virgin Mary, the author—John T. Willis, makes Immanuel refer to Judeans!

Edward J. Young affirms, "At the outset we may confidently assert that the word '*almah*' is never employed of a married woman" (p. 287). So, the question now becomes was the mother of Jesus chaste or unchaste? The only way for her to be chaste and be carrying Jesus in her womb is for her to be a virgin. Let's hear Young out on this point,

If, however, the mother is an unmarried woman, a question arises. Was the child illegitimate or not? If the child were illegitimate, would such a birth be a sign? The whole context, indeed the whole Biblical context, rules this out. On the other hand, if the mother were a good woman, then the birth was out of the ordinary, an unusual birth. The mother is both unmarried and a good woman. When this fact is understood, it becomes apparent that in all history there is only one of whom this can be predicated, namely, Mary, the mother of the Lord (p. 289).

The inspired apostle Matthew explained it in exactly those terms, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Mt. 1:21-23).

It is here that we see the premise upon which the ACU commentary is based as fatally flawed and impossible to salvage. Remember that of Old Testament prophecy they say, "There is no unequivocal specific prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ and/or the church in the Old Testament. New Testament speakers reinterpreted and reapplied Old Testament texts to Christ and/or the church" (p. 66)? A true scholar of the magnitude of Edward J. Young has affirmed, "In all history there is only one of whom this can be predicated, namely, Mary, the mother of the Lord," therefore, there is no way New Testament speakers could have "reinterpreted and reapplied" the Old Testament text to Christ because the Old Testament text was *always* about Christ!

Further, Willis, the author of the ACU commentary on Isaiah denies Christ in Isaiah 9:6-7 where Isaiah said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Willis's comments deny the Deity of the Son of God, the establishment of his kingdom having reference to the church of Christ (Mt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:1-47, *et al.*), the Kingly lineage of Christ through David, the "judgment and justice" associated with Christ's reign over his church/kingdom now in the Christian age, the eternal nature of his kingdom, and these developments reflecting both the zeal of God for these facts and his divine providence which brought them into reality. Note the unbelief of Willis,

In verses 6-7, the statements *for a child has been born for us, a son given to us* (NRSV) refer not to physical birth of a royal prince (Wildberger 398-402; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 248-49), but to a king's accession, which has already occurred when the prophet utters this (Clements 107; Hayes and Irvine 180-81). This *son* is Hezekiah, Ahaz's successor (p. 539).

The One about whom Isaiah prophesied in these verses, again as with the observations earlier on the virgin birth of Christ, could only be references to Jesus Christ not Hezekiah because the subject under consideration to qualify must reign over a kingdom concerning which "there shall be no end" and one that would be established "from henceforth even for ever"! King Hezekiah does not qualify; only the unique, one of a kind, only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ is meant.

Now, arriving at Isaiah 53 in *The Transforming Word*, the other 51 writers who have contributed to the success of this theologically liberal commentary have blended their work with what John T. Willis wrote that denies that Isaiah 53 speaks of the Messiah. He groups Isaiah 52:13 through Isaiah 53:12 and says,

The section opens in 52:13-15. Here Yahweh speaks concerning *my servant*, probably the remnant of Jewish exiles whom Yahweh restored through the exile (49:1-6; 50:4-11), declaring *he will be highly exalted*. Formerly, *many nations were appalled at him*, because he was *so disfigured*, but now he will awe *kings* because, through him, Yahweh will empower them to *see and understand what they were not told and have not heard* – that is, Yahweh's servant will be a light to the nations (42:6; 49:6) (p. 565).

So, what we are about to read in Isaiah 53 is not about the Messiah but about "the remnant of Jewish exiles." The critics claim the Messiah is not the suffering servant, the remnant is! Hear Willis again,

The larger body of Judean exiles in Babylon (*we, us, our, my people*) proclaim that the remnant suffered vicariously because of its *transgressions* and *iniquities* and stubborn impenitence. Yahweh's servant *grew up before* Yahweh with *no beauty or majesty to attract his fellows to him; they despised and rejected him* (verses 1-3) (p. 565).

So, according to Willis, *the remnant* is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, and *the remnant* "suffers vicariously because of its transgressions and iniquities" in order to atone for all the sins of the world! Willis has the remnant personified to become the righteous servant of Isaiah 53! Take notice of his complete argument for this from pages 565 and 566 of the ACU commentary.

Initially, the larger exile group considered Yahweh's servant *stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God*, but now they realize that *he was pierced and crushed* because of their *transgressions*, and *by his wounds they are healed*. They *have gone astray*, and *Yahweh has laid on his servant* (namely, the faithful remnant) the *iniquity* of the larger group (verses 4-6; 50:6).

Yahweh's servant voluntarily went *like a lamb to the slaughter* to be *stricken* because of *the transgression of Yahweh's people*, the larger exiled body. Reflecting his sacrificial attitude, *he did not open his mouth*. Though he was innocent, he suffered the indignity of burial in *a grave with the wicked and rich* for the sake of his comrades. In this way, *the Lord's will will prosper in his hand* (verses 7-10).

In verses 11-12, Yahweh speaks again concerning his servant (*my righteous servant*). Not only will Yahweh's servant, the faithful Judean exiles, restore some of their fellows, but he will also *bear the sin of* and thereby *justify many nations* (52:15; 49:5-6), or in other words, make *intercession for the transgressors*. "The individual servant's suffering and death are Israel's, on behalf of the nations" (Seitz, "Isaiah 40-66," 462).

Willis here views the text like an unbelieving Jew might: denying any suggestion of a Messianic prophecy foretelling the coming of Jesus Christ and his redemptive sacrifice on Calvary. Willis's effort is to lead people away from Calvary, away from Christ.

Willis has no knowledge of the righteous remnant. The righteous remnant are those who unlike the majority, the other ninety percent of Israel (Isa. 1:9; 6:13), will listen to Isaiah and humble themselves in deep contrition admitting their sins and turning to God (Isa. 57:15-18). The remnant stood in need of healing and restoration from God (Isa. 57:18). The remnant was not innocent as Willis alleges; they were not sinless; they could not qualify as a sin offering for others. Isaiah wrote, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way*" (Isa. 53:6a, emphasis added).

The remnant did not voluntarily offer themselves for the "larger exiled body." Six times in Isaiah mention is made of the corrective "hand" of God wielding its force against the collective backside of wayward Israel. The phrase familiar to those who have read the book is "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (Isa. 5:25; cf. also 5:25a; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4). Again, only Jesus Christ meets the demands of this prophecy. The gospel of John says, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (Jn. 10:17-18). Only he who "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" could qualify to be the Savior of the world (I Pet. 2:22). He is the one who voluntarily has "borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4a).

Affirming the Christ

The outline of Isaiah 53 has as its first point the "Prophecy Concerning Christ's Life, vv. 1-3." The text says, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 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."

The second point is the "Prophecy Concerning Christ's Death, vv. 4-8." The text reads, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

The third point is the "Prophecy Concerning Christ's Grave, v. 9." Isaiah wrote, "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

The fourth point is the "Prophecy Concerning Christ's Suffering and Glorification, vv. 10-12." The chapter closes with the words, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The Messianic prophecy about the suffering Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ, in these verses shows that not only would he die for us, he would die *instead* of us. This is what is meant by the "vicarious" death of Christ. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief," shows that the will of God for the salvation of men would be carried out through the suffering Servant, Jesus Christ. From even before this time in the eighth century B.C. right up until the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary, exactly how God's Will would be accomplished in this regard was not fully revealed. The reason for this received comment from the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 2:6-9, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." In the latter half of the nineteenth century the conservative Old Testament scholar F. Delitzsch spoke of the unfolding developments in God's plan for redeeming fallen humanity, and he also understood the connection between the sacrificial death of the Savior and the church. He wrote,

It was *men* who inflicted upon the Servant of God such crushing suffering, such deep sorrow; but the supreme *causa efficiens* [lit. cause effective or the power to cause an effect] in the whole was *God*, who made the sin of men subservient to His pleasure, His will, and predetermined counsel. The suffering of His Servant was to be to Him the way to glory, and this way of His through suffering to glory was to lead to the establishment of a church of the redeemed, which would spring from Him; in other words, it would become the commencement of that fulfilment [*sic*] of the divine plan of salvation which He, the ever-living, ever-working One, would carry out to completion (Keil and Delitzsch, p. 517).

Would it not be wonderful if all who consider themselves to be Christians understood that the body of Christ, which is the church of Christ, is the fulfillment of the divine plan of salvation and the exclusive realm where the vicarious death of Christ is realized. The Apostle Paul wrote in this connection "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

Anticipated in the vicarious death of the suffering Servant is his innocence. Peter commented, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Pet. 1:18-20). The qualification uniquely belongs to Christ of the sinless One offering himself for the sinful ones. The egregious and fatal error of John T. Willis, commentator on the book of Isaiah, and all those who have contributed to *The Transforming Word* from ACU Press longing for its success and acceptance is established in this observation because only a sinless sacrifice would suffice to take away the sins of others. Willis' suggestion that the Savior is absent from consideration in Isaiah 53 and the righteous remnant who return from Babylonian Captivity instead are meant, casts serious doubt not only on any desire he might have had to be taken seriously as a scholar but reflects unfavorably on his basic Bible knowledge. Do these people from ACU and their cohorts think that the world could ever forget (as apparently they all have) that God would ever and has ever accepted tainted corrupt sacrifices? How soon do people forget the soul stirring words of Malachi when he courageously wrote, "But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold,

what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen” (Mal. 1:12-14). And, further – and we just need to spend some time on this because our “scholars” have fallen asleep, if they ever were awake – forgiveness of sin is granted by God only through a blood sacrifice! Moses wrote, “And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:10-11). The Hebrews writer affirms this truth to be the case in every age of the world’s existence because he affirmed, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). When did the righteous remnant ever vicariously shed blood to atone for the sins of Israel? Those who died in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem could not be under consideration because they were not part of the remnant who returned! What an unmitigated shame that those who wrote for this commentary have denounced Christ and his church as appearing in prophecy in the Old Testament! What a travesty for all who have supported the schools represented in that commentary with their hopes for the future of the Lord’s church remaining strong, when now others (in many cases) without the educational advantages granted to them are having to defend even the most basic truths of the Bible regarding the salvation of the world to spare the church from them!

Only Jesus Christ qualifies as the suffering Servant from Isaiah 53 because of the grammar inspiration employed. If the righteous remnant returning from Babylonian Captivity was meant, then you would expect the plural pronouns to be used. Isaiah would have spoken of “they” not “him.” But, singular pronouns are used 44 times for the suffering Servant. 22 times Isaiah spoke of “he.” 10 times he spoke of “him.” 12 times he spoke of “his.” Not “them” but “him,” Jesus the Christ. Not even one time does the chapter use the words “they” or “them” in any context! What an unrelenting disappointment that otherwise educated people would put their name in a book like *The Transforming Word* and presume to call it a “one volume commentary on the Bible” (cover jacket).

If the Bible has one central character in both the Old and New Testaments and that one central character is Jesus Christ, and as already shown we unequivocally affirm such to be the case, then the fact that God the Father assured both him and the world for all time that through his sacrifice for sin forgiveness would be granted becomes perhaps the most meaningful and important truth in the universe. Isaiah wrote about the assurance of God on this point, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11a). Think of the darkness that enshrouded the earth from noon to three o’clock the day Christ was crucified (Mt. 27:45; Lk. 23:44). God the Father is

associated with light. For example, in I John 1:5 we read, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness all.” God the Father is called “the Father of lights” in James 1:17. But, when Jesus was bearing the sin of the world on Calvary for three hours he was enshrouded with darkness confirming the truth uttered long before by Habakkuk, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13a). What can this refer to other than the hurt and pain in the very heart of God the Father as his only begotten Son was bearing all the sin of the world for all time so much so that he had to turn away his face from such extensive, unfathomable horror? “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities”: one of the – if not *the* – greatest promises in all of the Bible!

In *The Bible Exposition Commentary* on “The Prophets” of the Old Testament, Warren W. Wiersbe observes of this text

The death of the Servant also satisfied the Law of God. The theological term for this is “propitiation” (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2). In pagan religions, the word meant “to offer a sacrifice to placate an angry god,” but the Christian meaning is much richer. God is angry at sin because it offends His holiness and violates His holy Law. In His holiness, He must judge sinners, but in His love, he desires to forgive them. God cannot ignore sin or compromise with it, for that would be contrary to His own nature and Law (p. 62).

Homer Hailey pointed out in his commentary on Isaiah how comprehensive these verses are in the scheme of redemption through the suffering Servant.

The five glorious stanzas of Isaiah’s final Servant Song consider various features of the Servant’s character, life, and mission: (1) His exaltation; (2) His acquaintance with grief; (3) His ill treatment and vicarious sufferings; (4) His total submission to Jehovah’s will; and (5) His victory and reward. On these hang the whole of the New Testament preaching and the salvation of all mankind (pp. 443-444).

Announcing the Christ

Upon “making his soul an offering for sin,” God promised him several things. One, “he shall see his seed”; two, “he shall prolong his days”; three, “the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand”; and four, God “will...divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong” (Isa. 53:10-12).

One, “he shall see his seed,” this is a reference to the resurrection of Christ—although he would sacrifice his life God would raise him up (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 16:8-11; Ps. 110:1-7)—and to his followers who would continue the spiritual line of Abraham

through Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26-29). The Hebrews' writer offers an inspired commentary on "he shall see his seed":

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:9-17).

Two, "he shall prolong his days," points to the victory Christ received when God raised him from the dead (Acts 3:15) and to the establishment of his eternal kingdom which is the church of Christ. Isaiah had spoken of the reign of Christ in these terms, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:6-7). Jesus promised during his personal ministry that nothing could keep him from establishing his church which is his kingdom, and he means not only would his death on the cross not prohibit his reigning but, as has already been discussed, his death while seeming to end his intentions to reign would actually facilitate it. He said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 16:18-19). His disciples understood that, for one of them wrote, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). And, the prophetic book of Revelation affirms in what is considered by many to be its key verse, "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven,

saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

Three, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" shows how God has raised him from the dead and highly exalted him to his own right hand in the heavenly places. Since Christ "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8-11). Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God in heaven where "angels and authorities and powers [are] being made subject unto him" (I Pet. 3:22). "The pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand" is realized through the church of Christ as Paul stated his desire for Christians, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:18-23).

And, four, God "will...divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong" points to the eternal reign of Christ victorious over all his foes. Paul remarks in I Corinthians 15:24-28, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." Therefore, is the innumerable company of angels in heaven "saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:12-14).

Conclusion

The Bible is a book about Jesus Christ throughout. Luke recorded the affirmation of Christ in this connection, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Lk. 24:44). The great

commission is the heralding of his glorification beginning at Jerusalem with the establishment of the church of Christ in A.D. 33 to the end of time. As Jesus "opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures," he "said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:46-47). One day he will return, as Paul taught, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (II Thess. 1:7-10). Because of what he did for us at Calvary, we have hope of eternal life as we remain obedient to the gospel continuing "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10). May our ever growing desire be to see that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). And, finally, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).