

The Message of Christmas brings Redemption

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

The message of Christmas is a study in contrasts. The light of the world shines in a world of darkness. A child born in obscurity will reign over all. A message of hope announced to outcasts. Perhaps the most shocking contrast is that the child was born to die. The manger sits in the shadow of the cross.

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 paints a prophetic portrait of the Messiah as the suffering servant. Through five stanzas of three verses each, the prophet describes the inconspicuous, unappreciated servant of the Lord who will suffer and die for the sins of the world. The passage is uniquely symmetrical. Stanzas one and five speak of his success. Stanzas two and four address his suffering. Stanza three highlights the salvation he provides.

This is perhaps the best-known section of the book of Isaiah. It is widely quoted in the New Testament. The passage is at the heart of the story of Christmas. *Jesus Christ is the Savior who died for our sins.*

Stanza 1: Success – Though unrecognized, the Messiah will be successful (52:13-15)

The servant will act wisely in accomplishing his mission on the earth. As a result, he will be highly exalted.

By earthly standards, Jesus was not attractive when he was on earth. During his trial and crucifixion, he became so disfigured that people were repulsed by his appearance. Yet it was his extreme suffering that gave him the power to cleanse us from our sins.

In response, people will be struck dumb. They will stand in slack-jawed amazement.

Stanza 2: Suffering – Though unimaginable, the Messiah was rejected (53:1-3)

So few people will believe the message about the servant. So few will acknowledge the message as coming from God. The responses will move from simple astonishment to outright rejection.

People might say pleasant and complimentary things about Jesus. They will praise his ethics and his teaching. They will proclaim him a good man and a prophet. They will say he has the answers to the problems of society. However, they will not acknowledge that they are sinners and deserve punishment, and that Christ's death satisfied the justice of God and reconciled us to God.

Stanza 3: Salvation – Though we deserved the punishment, the Messiah took it on himself and bore our sins (53:4-6)

The servant is characterized by grief and sorrow, but they are not his own. God was not punishing him. Instead, he was bearing the consequences of our sin.

The essence of sin is going your own way, rather than God's way. The tendency of sheep is to follow others, even to their own destruction. Humans are no better.

We are fortunate that we have a shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, namely you and me.

Stanza 4: Suffering – Though innocent, the Messiah silently submitted to suffering (53:7-9)

Sheep are submissive when being sheared or slaughtered. That is the picture of Jesus as he quietly submitted to his death because he knew it would benefit those who would believe in him.

If his life ended with the grave, his heroism would have been admirable but futile. The empty tomb proved that there was more to his death than anyone realized.

Stanza 5: Success – Though the Messiah's death appeared a tragedy, it was part of God's plan and would result in victory (53:10-12)

The suffering and death of the servant was clearly God's will. None of this was accidental, it was all intended. His suffering was a guilt offering, but not for his own sins, but for those of the people. Still, God made him prosper.

His suffering led to life. Because his substitutionary work was completed, he now can justify those who believe. His bore our punishment so we would not have to die. Because of his sacrifice, he can now make many righteous.

Isaiah gives us a multi-faceted portrait of the message of Christmas. Jesus Christ is the child who brings hope to the world (9:1-7). Jesus is the king who will establish a kingdom of justice and peace (11:1-16). Jesus is the shepherd who delivers his people (40:1-11). Jesus is the savior who died for our sins (52:13-53:12).

The prophecies of Isaiah are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The message of Christmas brings:

- **Hope**—Jesus is the child who brings hope to the world (9:1-7)
- **Justice**—Jesus is the king who will establish a kingdom of justice and peace (11:1-16)
- **Comfort**—Jesus is the shepherd who delivers his people (40:1-11)
- **Redemption**—Jesus is the savior who died for the sins of the world (52:13-53:12)

Celebrating Christmas is as easy as A-B-C. Admit you are a sinner. **Believe** the gospel that Christ paid the penalty for your sins. Receive **Christ** as Savior and Lord.

Give thanks for the Savior who was born in Bethlehem and who died that you might be forgiven.

Celebrate the Son!