

## LENT ACCORDING TO ISAIAH

Isaiah sees Christ's humiliation -- Isaiah sees Christ's exaltation.

Isaiah 52:13-15

**TEXT:** *See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him-- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness-- so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

I often require my students of Bible History to memorize Isaiah 53 because it is the story of Lent and Easter all so beautifully and powerfully condensed into these few words.

Isaiah was what we might call today, "the king's preacher." He served the Lord during Judah's most godless king, Ahaz, and his son, Hezekiah. As ungodly as Ahaz, his son, Hezekiah was an outstanding "Christian."

It was during the reign of godless Ahaz that the Lord revealed that most powerful prophecy. In his unbelief, Ahaz was quaking in his boots over the fact that kings of the north had allied themselves against Judah and were poised to strike. The Lord sent Isaiah to Ahaz to tell him that they would not succeed. The prophet Isaiah even offered this to Ahaz: Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights. Yet Ahaz fakes humility when he says: I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test. In anger at this hypocrisy, Isaiah shouts: ***Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*** Is 7 Ahaz had made Isaiah angry because of his unbelief. That's why Isaiah said to him: ***Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?*** Is 7 It's not enough for you to push me to the brink with your unbelief! You are so arrogant as to test God's patience as well? Then Isaiah spoke the sign God wanted more than just Ahaz to hear: ***Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign:*** (here the word "you" is not singular as a sign to just Ahaz, but plural, "you all," a sign meant for everyone in the world) ... ***The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*** Is 7

The sign, or miracle, would be the birth of Immanuel, which means "God with us" from the womb of a virgin. That baby "God with us" would become the world's Savior from sin, death and Satan.

Jump now to today's text and the verses we will be studying over the next weeks of the Lenten Season. Isaiah will teach us as he taught the ancient Christians living in the days before Christ all that is necessary for salvation. In the Scripture before us this morning Isaiah sees Christ's Humiliation and his Exultation. We ask what Ahaz should have asked his pastor: What does this mean?

Isaiah writes about Jesus, who is here called the Lord's "Servant." Jesus, Immanuel, "God with us," is God made human flesh sent to serve God's plan of saving all mankind. He will succeed. Isaiah writes: ***See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him-- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness-- so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.*** He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. But note carefully what Isaiah inserts in this victorious passage: ***Just as there were many who were appalled at him-- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness-- so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him.*** These words speak of what Christian teachers call "Christ's Humiliation."

While the word "humiliation" is usually used within the context of being humiliated or grossly embarrassed, we use the word to describe the period of time from when the eternal Son of God was inserted into time and the womb of the virgin Mary to the time the crucified and risen Lord Jesus descended into hell and then ascended into heaven. Although we would say that it was truly a humiliating thing to see the innocent Son of God spit on, beaten to a pulp, then stripped naked and hung on cross like a common criminal, that humiliation was just a tiny part of all that the period of his "humiliation" involved.

The Lord's state of humiliation began all the divine majesty, power and glory was stuffed into Mary's womb as a tiny human seed that would immediately begin to grow into a child that would be born into this cold,

cruel world. Was Jesus aware of this event? Paul writes: *(Jesus), being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!* Phil 2 What does this mean to us?

It means that we look beyond what we see that has happened to us because of our sins and look forward to the end result of our faith in Jesus whose suffering and death has redeemed us from sin and death. Concerning Jesus who was sent to become our sin, Isaiah said: *Just as there were many who were appalled at him-- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness...* just as Jesus' face was disfigured beyond recognition as soldiers punched him and beat him, whipped and flogged him, so it is that you and I have disfigured ourselves with sin so that we are nothing like what God first created mankind to be. When God looks down upon us he sees nothing like what He created us to be, but a creation disfigured by our sins and made stinky and smelly by the death that is creeping up on every human body not yet in the grave. It means that we look to Jesus who became the curse of sin for us, and as Isaiah continues to write and teach: *-- so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.* Understand what? Understand what Scripture reveals concerning Jesus' victory in "sprinkling the nations" with his blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Here begins what we call the Lord's "State of Exaltation."

To this "State of Exaltation" Isaiah refers when he writes: *See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.* Raised, lifted up, and highly exalted. The crucified Christ looked horrible as his body hung on the cross. His enemies saw victory, but Isaiah advised the believers of the world to look to the victory. For on Easter Sunday, that crucified body rose from the dead with no marks of his suffering, crucifixion and death except those blessed nail holes, the reminders of his sacrifice, left in his hands and feet. He rose from the dead and declared: *I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.* Jn 11 And then, 40 days after his resurrection he lifted his hands in blessing and ascended to the Right Hand of God to continue to rule his Church until the moment of his promised return on Judgment Day.

Isaiah saw our Lord's state of humiliation that worked our salvation and his state of exaltation that promises our future that is yet unseen but assured to some by his own resurrection and ascension. Isaiah saw this and wrote this down for the world to see and believe. But many did not. Some of them, even though they were the religious leaders and teachers of the Jews, didn't see and they crucified the Lord of glory. In addition to what Isaiah saw, we have the actual historical account of our Savior's work of redemption. Yet even today many do not see and believe. They will be revealed on Judgment Day. To them Jesus says: *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'* Mt 7 Pray God's Holy Spirit ever keep all of us with our eyes of faith wide open and focused on what is to come! May none of us ever rise to hear our Lord say to us plainly: *'I never knew you. Away from me ... !'* Mt 7

As I pointed out earlier, Paul wrote about the Lord's State of Humiliation and Exaltation when he wrote: *(Jesus), being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!* Phil 2 And I asked: what does this mean to us? Paul said: *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...* Phil 2 That is, let us humbly carry the crosses that our Lord chooses to place on our shoulders, and gladly look to what is to come to us through Jesus! Let us pray for those who do not see and patiently testify what is written for our salvation!

Pray that through your life and faith, others will join us in seeing what Isaiah saw: Jesus' humiliation for our salvation and his exaltation that is soon to become our glory. Amen.