

Here's What the Lord Said He'd Do
 Pastor Sam Richards
 Easter Sunday 2022
 Text: Isaiah 53:1-9

So, what is Easter? How do we know what it is? Easter relates to a very specific promise, indeed, ***the promise of the ages***: the promise uttered to Eve as part of the tragic fall-out from the sin of mankind (Gen. 3:15), an act of disobedience that brought about the present situation we are in—a situation of spiritual consequences for rebellion, revolt and the failure to love God by keeping faith with God! What I propose this morning is to refresh our knowledge of that promise through a point for point relation of the fourth servant song *as it is fulfilled* through the Easter, or passion narrative. I want to present a case for the prophetic efficacy of the word of God, of God performing that which He said He would do. He is faithful! I will begin with an introduction of the jubilant anticipation in Isaiah 52 which colors the study passage—especially Isaiah 53:1-12 which is the foundation of our Christian hope.

With great, joyful anticipation the people of God ask in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, the fourth and final Servant Song, **Who has believed what he has heard from us?** This “us” refers to the faithful, the remnant of Israel, or the redeemed of the Lord. Who has believed our report of the workings of the power of God, ***the arm of the Lord***, in securing for us justification before God—through the righteousness of Christ imparted to us by faith. We are forgiven by what the power of God acting through the work Christ has achieved—our redemption is the **finished work** that Christ declares as “accomplished” from the cross! The divine mercy of God has done this for undeserving people. They are not undeserving merely because of sin and disobedience; they are undeserving because of their contemptuous ways: they spurn God’s ways, reject His counsel and hold their God in disdain and contempt. **While we were yet enemies** (Rom. 5:10) **God reconciled us to Himself**, the whole passage (vv. 9-11) is worth quoting:

...9 Therefore, since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from wrath through Him! 10 For if, when we were enemies of God, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! 11 Not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Yes, while we were both estranged and alienated, even while we were yet hostile to God, *God sent His Son to sacrifice Himself for our sakes so that the power of sin might be broken*: guilt and shame cancelled, fear, death, cruelty and evil overthrown. ***God did this*** in order to establish ***that how we have always been as sinners is no longer how we have to be***. “We’ve never done it this way before” must cease to be our motto. And in its place we declare that **all things are possible for those who believe**. (Mark 9:23) ***God did this*** to elevate love over hate, courage over fear and life over death.

Of course, only the redeemed of the Lord have seen this. They, having been purchased by the blood, are direct beneficiaries of this great and powerful move of God. All others will be caught up in astonishment (if they believe the report) and in disbelief (if they lack faith). **It will appear to be foolishness to them**. Or, superstition, fable and story and dismissible fantasy. *They consider themselves too smart, clever and sophisticated to be taken in by*

*such things . . . science and reason, they say, are their guides*¹. There is a huge difference between knowing God, walking in His ways, and being educated out of one's faith. The latter is actually the folly that the "enlightened" project onto the faithful remnant. The remnant is the "us" behind this report!

Isaiah 52 begins with *an awakening*—they had been asleep, in a time of torpor, or spiritual dormancy much resembling the cry of the Lord to Lazarus, who had been dead and buried: **Come forth. And he who had been dead appears** that kind of awakening is in mind. Now, **put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments.**

The prayer of Zion is heard and answered. God awakes, and clothes Himself with might. Then, as some warrior king, himself roused from sleep and girded with flashing steel, bids the clarion sound through the grey twilight to summon the prostrate ranks that lie round his tent, so the sign of God's awaking and the first act of His conquering might is this trumpet call—'The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us put off the works of darkness,'—the night gear that was fit for slumber—'and put on the armor of light, 'the mail of purity that gleams and glitters even in the dim dawn. *God's awaking is our awaking.* He puts on strength by making us strong; for His arm works through us, clothing itself, as it were, with our arm of flesh, and perfecting itself even in our weakness. A Maclaren

You were sold for nothing, says the prophet, **and you will be redeemed without money.** (v. 3) God himself will ransom us with the ransom that he alone can supply! And that ransom will be the sacrifice of the Son, even God incarnate. **How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings old news; who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion your God reigns!**

Historically the tidings were of the fall of Babylon and the return of the Jews to their own land—after seventy years of captivity. Splendor was returning to the city and to the temple. But, in anticipation, these good tidings foreshadow the gospel. The feet of John the Baptist are in view. Peace by the blood of Jesus is in view: peace of reconciliation, peace of conscience, and peace among the saints. That publishes salvation:

that publisheth salvation; by Jesus Christ, as wrought out by him for sinners, which is full, complete, and suitable for them, and to be had of him freely; and what better tidings than this? see Revelation 19:1, J-Gill

That saith unto Zion, thy God reigns (on which the Targum comments: "the kingdom of thy God is revealed.") translates into Christ **as the Lord God omnipotent** reigns—this is very good and glad news.

With that as introduction, let's proceed to the text. Isaiah 53:1 asks **who has believed . . . the report concerning us** (alluding to both the returning exiles, or the apostolic witness *who experienced Christ's ministry*), and I have suggested that the answer is only the redeemed. Both the returning exiles and the apostles have experienced redemption/salvation—something quite non-transmittable to others. However, unbelievers

¹ Christians are guided by faith and revelation and these yield eternal verities irrespective of time—that is, the inspired word can come before, after, or in the very midst of the matters as God chooses to reveal them.

are filled with incredulity: quite apart from “experience” and or historical distance, the concepts in Christ’s “mission” are too alien, too bizarre; too violent and cruel—certainly distasteful and offensive even to the modern mind (and not just skeptics and the “scientific.” What is frankly bizarre to me about this “disbelief” is that people feel free to criticize a divine work, as undertaken by God and completed by God, as if they are competent to judge their Creator God—to question His character, impugn His motives, slander His salvation(!) as if our human sensibilities warrant such a judgment or interrogation! *Who and what do we think we are?!*

If redemption were not entirely just, and Christ’s sacrifice not divinely sanctioned, a holy and necessary matter; I venture to say *it would not have been decreed, or accomplished*.

I am confirmed in this opinion, I think, by the prayers offered up in Gethsemane: where Christ asked, **If it were possible that this cup be taken away from Him**. Plain meaning of that request is to establish the necessity of the crucifixion, death and burial. And the answer to that necessity is “yes” as demonstrated by the performance of the same that followed. *This was the manner of atonement, the sacrifice that was absolutely required to achieve our salvation*. How ironic that we should **question God’s method** of displaying His love and mercy as unloving! “Lord, we are so glad that you saved us, but we really must object to how you went about it. We can’t conceive of that as loving, or just, or right.” Amazing isn’t it, when we mere humans put God in our dock?!

Quite preposterous, considering that His character is unimpeachable, and that His thoughts are not our thoughts— **His thoughts are as high as the heavens are above the earth**—that’s the operative phrase. Psalm 103:11-14 says:

**11 For “as high as the heavens are above the earth,”
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who [a]fear Him.**

**12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**

**13 Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the Lord has compassion on those who [b]fear Him.**

**14 For He Himself knows [c]our frame;
He is mindful that we are but dust.**

Isaiah 55:9-11 seconds with:

**9 “For ‘as the heavens are higher than the earth,’
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.**

**10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.**

So, only the redeemed have the ears to hear, and the faith to believe the report that follows.

Strong prejudices have sprung up regarding this Servant/Savior. There were strong prejudices in the land from both those who returned, and those who had remained. It created division and strife. Nehemiah had to assist Ezra in overcoming the social inertia caused by the exile! **For he grew up before him like a young plant, and a root out of dry ground.** (Meaning: A peasant virgin girl's womb? The impoverished Jewish nation in Jesus' day? The devastated city following the destruction of Jerusalem? Out of a poor, contemptible family, a carpenter's son?) Jesus, is a vigorous sprout coming out of the root of the royal house of David, in such seclusion . . . rural, disenfranchised, among the population that the cultural elite held to be despicable (A Galilean?, **Nathan'a-el said to him** (Philip), **"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"** (John 1:46) **Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.'** (John 7:52) **But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed².** (John 7:49)—they are just "ignorant and uninstructed persons." Those who think themselves superior, consider those beneath them, "unscientific," or "deplorables."

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him. No pleasing form, or comeliness (*hâdâr*—a word translated honor, glory, majesty. . . excellency and/or beauty of countenance). He was hidden in the *ordinariness* of our common humanity.

This easily explains why so many say, "He was just a man." This is a superficial view. Jesus has, to the eyes of faith, the true beauty of holiness and goodness, incomparably so, and great majesty in his aspect—he walked royally. His mere look conveyed conviction as with Peter after his third denial. Evil men scuttled away from Him like cockroaches, fleeing the light! But these qualities being spiritually discerned were invisible to most of those who

² The writings of the Rabbis are full of scorn and contempt for the untutored multitude whom they called *hāāretz*, -"people of the earth," as opposed to those instructed in the Law, whom they called *ā'm kōdesh*, "holy people." **But this people who knoweth not the law . . .**—The words express "Those people there, among whom you have been, and with whose opinion you have been coinciding, instead of holding the authoritative opinion which we have declared, and which we alone can declare. We are the interpreters of the Law, and have the key of knowledge. That ignorant rabble uninstructed in the Law are cursed." Ellicott's Commentary

13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them [that they had been] as having been with Jesus. The authorities seriously misjudged the apostles due to this prejudice as they misprized Jesus.

54 Coming to His hometown, He taught the people in their synagogue, and they were astonished. "Where did this man get such wisdom and miraculous powers?" they asked. 55 "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't His mother's name Mary, and aren't His brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas?...

Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? (Matt. 13:54) They knew his education, how that he had not been put to school, had never learned letters of men, or received any instructions from their learned doctors; and therefore could not imagine, how he came by such sublime and divine knowledge, and by what power he performed such wonderful things; looking upon him to be a mere man, and a very mean, and contemptible one: not knowing that he was the wisdom of God, and the power of God; which had they been acquainted with, there would have been no room, nor reason, for such questions. J. Gill

encountered him. Carnal minds are not likely to pick up on the traces of excellence in such a man. Yea, instead of being desired, he was **despised and rejected**—perhaps, **man-forsaken** is better, a crowning sorrow . . . as one unworthy of the company of better men. **A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.** “The prophet’s words point to the true view, that this was an essential condition of His fellowship with humanity. If we do not read of any actual disease in the Gospel, we at least have evidence of an organization every nerve of which thrilled with its sensitiveness to pain, and was quickly exhausted (Luke 8:46; John 4:6; Mark 4:36). The intensity of His sympathy made Him feel the pain of others as His own (Matthew 8:17), the “blood and water” from the pierced heart, the physical results of the agony in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44; John 19:34), indicate a nature subject to the conditions of our humanity.” Ellicott’s Commentary. **As one from whom men hid their faces**³. (“His appearance was such as to cause men involuntarily to cover their face from the sight of him.” See Job 19:19. -Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.) “The preaching concerning His calling and His future was not believed; but the Man of sorrows was greatly despised among us.” -K & D.

4 Surely our [sickness] griefs He Himself bore,/And our [pains] sorrows He carried;/Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,/ [struck down by] Smitten of God, and afflicted. These words appear as if spoken by those who had previously despised the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. They describe someone who has endured suffering in his own person, as in penal substitution—bearing it as our punishment. But, and this is the point, we basically missed it by concluding that God was smiting Him, making a moral judgment that marked Him as somehow being especially deserving of God’s wrath—when that is our own case. He suffered in our place. We failed to see Him as the Sin-bearer that He was, doing a redeeming work of atonement.

5 But He was [bruised/wounded] pierced through for our transgressions⁴,/ He was crushed (דָּכָא dâkâ') for our iniquities (though he himself had no sin(!) making this vicarious);/ **The chastening for our [peace, every form of blessing] well-being fell upon Him,/And by His scourging** (bruising-The word used here in Hebrew (חִבּוּרָה chabbûrâh) means properly stripe, weal, bruise, that is, the mark or print of blows on the skin.) **we are healed.** Christ was “wounded” or “pierced” (1) by the thorns; (2) by the nails⁵; (3) by the

³ The Septuagint, 'His appearance is dishonored (ἀτίμον atimon) and defective (ἐκλείπον ekleipon) more than the sons of men.' The Chaldee, 'He is indeed despised, but he shall take away the glory of all kings; they are infirm and sad, as if exposed to all calamities and sorrows.' Some render it, 'Most abject of men,' and they refer to [Job 19:14](#), where the same word is used to denote those friends who forsake the unfortunate. -Barnes' Notes

On the contrary, the impression produced by His appearance was rather repulsive, and, to those who measured the great and noble by a merely worldly standard, contemptible. K & D

⁴ Not for any sins of his own, but for ours, for our rebellions against God, and transgressions of his law, in order to make atonement and satisfaction for them; these were the procuring and meritorious causes of his sufferings and death, as they were taken upon him by him to answer for them to divine justice. -J. Gill

⁵ The wounds inflicted by the nails caused his death, He was bruised; or, crushed (comp. [Isaiah 3:15](#); [Isaiah 19:10](#); [Isaiah 57:15](#). [Psalm 72:4](#)). "No stronger expression could be found in Hebrew to denote severity of suffering - suffering unto death" (Urwick). Crushed, applied to the mind it means to break down, or crush by calamities and trials—severe inward suffering! The Septuagint renders it, Μεμαλάκιστα Memalakista - 'He was rendered languid,' or feeble. The same idea occurs in the

scourging and (4) by the spear of the soldier. A companion thought to this attainment of peace, is "the perfection of the sufferer" as well as "the peace that follows chastisement."⁶ "Chastisement" is pain inflicted for moral ends and with remedial intent (**Proverbs 3:11 f.**)
-Pulpit Commentary

"It may be remarked here, that this could not be mere conjecture: How could Isaiah, *seven hundred years before it occurred*, conjecture that the Messiah would be scourged and bruised? It is this particularity of prediction, compared with the literal fulfillment, which furnishes the fullest demonstration that the prophet was inspired." -Barnes' Notes, 1832 (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870, notable theologian from New York State).

Barnes comments further on this vicarious suffering of Christ. Vicarious means "experienced in the imagination through the feelings or actions of another person," something done on behalf of another:

It would be in our place, and in our stead; and it would be designed to have the same effect in recovering us, as though it had been inflicted on ourselves. And will it not do it? Is it not a fact that it has such an effect? Is not a man as likely to be recovered from a course of sin and folly, who sees another suffer in his place what he ought himself to suffer, as though he was punished himself? Is not a wayward and dissipated son quite as likely to be recovered to a course of virtue by seeing the sufferings which his career of vice causes to a father, a mother, or a sister, as though he himself when subjected to severe punishment? -Barnes'

About Christ's chastisement, John Gill comments: The ancient Jews understood this of the Messiah; in one place, they say (Mecilta apud Yalkut, par. 2. fol 90. 1.): "chastisements are divided into three parts, one to David and the fathers, one to our generation, and one to the King Messiah; as it is written, "he was wounded for our transgressions; and bruised for our iniquities": "**and with his stripes we are healed; or "by his stripe" (q), or "bruise"**: [properly the black and blue mark of it, so called from the gathering and settling of the blood where the blow is given.] Sin is a disease belonging to all men, a natural, hereditary, nauseous, and **incurable one, but by the blood of Christ**, forgiving sin is a healing of this disease; and this is to be had, and in no other way, than through the stripes and wounds, the blood and sacrifice, of the Son of God. Christ is a wonderful physician; he heals by taking the sicknesses of his people upon himself, by bearing their sins, and being wounded and bruised for them, and by his enduring blows, and suffering death itself for them. The Targum is, "when we obey his words, our sins will be forgiven us; "but forgiveness is not through our obedience, but the blood of Christ."

22 And according to the [a]Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22

Syriac translation. The meaning is, that he was under such a weight of sorrows on account of our sins, that he was, as it were, crushed to the earth. -Barnes' Notes

⁶ The connection is two-fold; in the first place the Servant's *suffering* was the penalty due to the people's transgressions, and in the second place that suffering was the remedy by which we are restored to spiritual health—both forgiven and right with God/reconciled to God.

Again, the necessity of the shed blood of Christ comes to the fore. *The Message* renders Hebrews 9:18-22 thus: **“Even the first plan required a death to set it in motion. After Moses had read out all the terms of the plan of the law—God’s “will”—he took the blood of sacrificed animals and, in a solemn ritual, sprinkled the document and the people who were its beneficiaries. And then he attested its validity with the words, “This is the blood of the covenant commanded by God.”(Exodus 24:8) He did the same thing with the place of worship and its furniture. Moses said to the people, “This is the blood of the covenant God has established with you.” Practically everything in a will hinges on a death. That is why blood, the evidence of death, is used so much in our tradition, especially regarding the forgiveness of sins.”** *The Message* is not a translation, but more of a paraphrase; however, it accurately draws together several strands related to the effectual nature of Christ’s shed blood. It is especially adroit at restating the covenant aspect—first the Mosaic and then the new, or better covenant in Christ’s shed blood. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; **i.e.** “the chastisement which brought us peace,” which put a stop to the enmity between fallen man and an offended God - which made them once more **at one** (comp. Ephesians 2:15-17, “Having **abolished in his flesh the enmity**, even the Law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, **so making peace**; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, **having slain the enmity thereby**: and came and preached **peace** to you which were afar off;”

Colossians 1:20, “Having **made peace** through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself”). With his stripes we are healed; rather, **we were healed** (comp. 1 Peter 2:24, “By whose stripes ye were healed”).

Besides the blows inflicted on him with the hand (Matthew 26:27) and with the reed (Matthew 27:30), our Lord was judicially scourged (Matthew 27:26). Such scourging would leave the “stripe-marks” which are here spoken of. Isaiah 53:5” -Pulpit Commentary

In conclusion, I must touch upon the most conspicuous absence of the resurrection in this Easter message. The “promise of the ages,” **your seed, Eve, shall bruise the head of your adversary** (even Satan, the invertebrate enemy of all humanity—the hater of God, the murderous, lying, thieving and deceptive one) was fulfilled in the finished work of Christ! What God promised to do (as described in Isaiah 53) and is described for us in the gospels (which relate the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ) are like an enormously important document, like a charter, or our Constitution. And, in this metaphor, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead is God’s divine seal of approval on that document.

The resurrection, as the seal, vindicates the work, authorizes and authenticates the work as from God, as by God. Paul declares the resurrection to be the vindication of Christ (as **promised beforehand . . . declared the Son of God with power**). See Romans 1:1-4:

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, [a]called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a [b]descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power [c]by the resurrection from the dead, according to the [d]Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul echoes the apostolic perspective of Peter, as preached in the “Sermon at Pentecost,” Acts 2:14-41, so-called. It might better be labeled the “First Easter Sermon” despite following the resurrection of Christ some fifty days prior! Here’s the nub of what Peter declared:

22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man [a, accredited] attested to you by God with [b]miracles and wonders and [c]signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— 23 this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God (As prophesied in Isaiah 53 and elsewhere!), you nailed to a cross by the hands of [d]godless men and put *Him* to death. 24 [e]But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the [f, birth pangs] agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held [g]in its power.

31 he (David, as prophet) looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of [a, the Messiah] the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh [b]suffer decay. 32 This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore having been exalted [c]to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. 34 For it was not David who ascended into [d]heaven, but he himself says:

‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and [a]Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

For I delivered unto you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to Scripture. (1 Cor. 15:3-4) So I deliver unto you: Christ has died, Christ is risen . . . rejoice with me. He’s alive.

Amen