Youth Teaching Resources

October 21, 2018

Doing, and Being
(September 2-November 25)

Genesis 2:18-24 – "Being Equal"

Psalm 90 (RCL 90:12-17) – "Gaining Perspective"

Isaiah 53:4-12 – "Redeeming Love"

Jeremiah 31:7-9 – "Saving Grace"

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Redeeming Love

Isaiah 53:4-12

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support The Bible Lesson by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Parent Prep

If it came down to it, I know we would all sacrifice ourselves for our children, but we shouldn't sacrifice ourselves throughout the course of our lives. There are many parents that give up who they are so they can devote all of who they are to their students. Parents are also given gifts and talents; blessed by God. These shouldn't be given up on because someone has children. This isn't to say you don't make sacrifices for your children, but don't sacrifice who you are either. Don't get so wrapped up in your kids that you lose your own identity.

Teaching the Lesson

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip "Steve Trevor's Sacrifice Scene" from *Wonder Woman*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

1) Why does Steve Trevor sacrifice himself?
2) What emotions do you think are going through his head as it happens?
3) What does the sacrifice do to Wonder Woman?
4) Why can't Ares understand why Steve did what he did?
5) How is sacrificed influenced by your faith?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Isaiah 53:1-12. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

1) Who was Isaiah? What impact does this have on how you read the passage for today?

2) Who was Isaiah talking about in this prophesy? Who do we ascribe this prophesy to be about?

3) How is a servant supposed to take on our own pain?

4) How would the people Isaiah was preaching to reacted as they heard him?

5) Some people still don't get why Jesus did what he did, even after it happened. Why is it so hard for people to believe what Jesus did?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

1) Who are the multiple writers of Isaiah?

2) What would it have been like to live in exile?

3) What are the Servant Songs in Isaiah?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Who was the "servant" in the Servant Songs?

Transformation

Conclude your session by leading the group through the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* using the text from today as your guide. If you have not led a group through *Lectio Divina*, familiarize yourself with the practice before doing so. After you have led your group through the practice, allow the students to share what the text "said" to them.

Close with a prayer thanking God for Jesus and for the life, love, death, and resurrection that we lived through so that we might have life abundantly.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support The Bible Lesson by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the "shovel" icon in the The Bible Lesson, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Multiple Isaiahs?—Readers commonly assume that a single author was responsible for the entire content of a biblical book attributed to Isaiah. One might argue that the first Isaiah simply had God-given foresight, and during times of meditation, wrote the sections that would address issues that would not arise for nearly 200 years. The most likely explanation, however, is that there were at least two, if not three prophets who contributed to the compilation of prophecies that became known by the name of its primary author, Isaiah of Jerusalem.

During the eighth century, the Israelites lived in two separate kingdoms: a northern realm called "Israel," and a southern one known as "Judah." The first Isaiah, often called "Isaiah of Jerusalem," spent most of his life in Judah's capitol city, but spoke to the people of both nations. He lived in an age of relative peace and prosperity for the Israelites as a whole, but a time of oppression for the poor as wealthier Hebrews bought up property, often leaving the poor homeless and forced to work as indentured servants. The false security of peaceful times led many to think of religion as a system of required rituals, with no demand for personal righteousness and justice. Isaiah joined the prophets Micah, Amos, and Hosea in decrying injustice and launching verbal barbs designed to deflate Israel's false sense of security.

Isaiah understood the political scene as well as the economic, social and religious aspects of life in Palestine. During Isaiah's ministry, the northern kingdom was defeated and carried into captivity. As the prophet predicted, Judah also fell under the power of Assyria, living as a vassal state. For the most part, Isaiah 1-39 describes this period in Israel's life.

With chapter 40, however, the scene clearly shifts from eighth-century Judah to sixth-century Babylon. Judah fell to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE. Many Judahites were marched to Babylon that year, and many more were forced into captivity following the destruction of Jerusalem 10 years later.

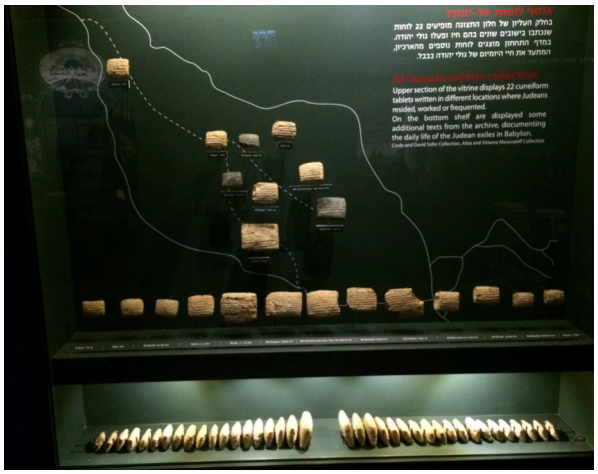
God used Isaiah of Jerusalem to afflict the comfortable and warn them of the coming captivity. Nearly two centuries later, as the people languished in captivity, God raised up another prophet who spoke comfort to the afflicted. We often speak of him as "Second Isaiah." This prophet spoke words of comfort and hope to a defeated and downhearted people. His work appears in Isaiah 40-55. As he preached in God's name, this Isaiah envisioned a coming "servant" who would suffer in behalf of his people.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Following the exile, the Hebrews who returned to Jerusalem faced different challenges, which are reflected in Isaiah 56-66. It is possible that Second Isaiah returned with the other Hebrews and continued to speak in that context. It is more likely, however, that yet a third prophet arose to preach in the spirit of Isaiah. He is typically known as "Third Isaiah."

The possibility that multiple prophets contributed to the book called "Isaiah" does not take away from the Scripture's authority. Rather, it testifies to God's interest in providing the message people need to hear in the time they need to hear it.

Life in exile—While the prophets and psalmists portrayed the exile as a time of great suffering, their most serious loss was their homeland. A variety of cuneiform texts from ancient Babylon attests that the Babylonians provided regular rations for the Hebrews, assigned them places to live and allowed them to participate in regular commerce. When Cyrus allowed the Hebrews to return to Israel, many decided to remain in Babylon, the only home they had known. For an interesting recap of these, see Laurie E. Pearce, "How Bad Was the Babylonian Exile?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 43:5 (Sept.-Oct. 2016), 48-64.



The cuneiform tablets in the picture to the left described commercial activities of Jews living in various places in Babylon, including a settlement known as "Judah-town." The tablets were on display at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem in 2015. They include tablets recording business deals made by the Jewish family of Samak-Yama, including his son, grandson, and his grandson's five sons. A brief video of the exhibit can be found at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-archaeology-babylon-idUSKBN0L71EK20150203.

Servant songs—Today's text comes from one of several "Servant Songs" found from the prophecies of Isaiah of the Exile (Isaiah 40-55). The "Servant Songs" are often identified as Isa. 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:1-11, and 52:13-53:12, but scholars disagree on their precise limits. Some, for example, consider the first song to be comprised of Isa. 42:1-4 only, while others see it as 42:1-7 and others stretch it to 42:1-9. The second song is often delimited as 49:1-6, but some scholars see it continuing through v. 13. Some identify the third song as 50:1-11, but others include only 50:4-11. There is little question about the limits of the fourth song, marked as 52:13-53:12. Some scholars interpret Isaiah 55 as a fifth servant song.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support The Bible Lesson by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Who was the "servant" in the Servant Songs?

Who did Isaiah have in mind when speaking of this servant? The answer is not as obvious as one would like, as the various passages do not always refer to the servant in the same way, and may not always have the same concept in mind.

Early on, Israel's rabbis interpreted the texts as predictions of the hoped-for Davidic messiah, tending to discount the aspects of suffering. After Jesus' life and ministry, New Testament writers described Jesus as a new and different kind of messiah ("Christ," like "Messiah," means "anointed one"). They saw the prophecies as looking toward the coming of Jesus, who would suffer in behalf of the people, and thus win their redemption.

The servant sometimes seems to be Jacob-Israel in a corporate sense. The book of Isaiah often uses language similar to that of the Servant Songs to describe Israel as a whole: "But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen" (41:8), "But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen" (44:1; see also 44:21; 45:4; 49:3, 5-6). Today, many Jewish and some Christian scholars also think of the servant as describing the corporate personality of the nation as a whole, which suffered on the way to becoming a cleansed and better people. Some have argued that the prophet saw himself as the servant, standing in for the nation as a whole.

It is possible to see Isaiah's prophecy as multivalent: God's challenge to Jacob-Israel might be fulfilled in different ways by the people as a whole, or by a single servant playing a particular role. Some scholars even see the servant in 42:1-9 as Cyrus, the Persian king who would conquer Babylon and set the Israelites free. Isaiah calls Cyrus by name and calls him God's shepherd who will carry out his purpose (44:28), and even God's "anointed" or *meshiah* (45:1), the same word that became "Messiah."

For the most part, when the servant is mentioned in passages outside of the Servant Songs, the prophet appears to be referring to the people of Israel and Judah as God's intended servant, though the people are disinclined or unable to fulfill their calling. Thus, another must stand in for them and carry out the mission the people have failed to accomplish. The Servant Songs portray the servant more as an individual who would suffer in behalf of others.

New Testament writers saw Jesus as the ultimate "servant of Yahweh" who fulfilled the purpose Isaiah described. Matthew 12:18-21 connects the ministry of Jesus with the fulfillment of Isa. 42:1-4, and Philip explained to an Ethiopian seeker that Jesus was the suffering servant described in Isa. 53:7-8 (Acts 8:26-35). It is likely that Jesus, who introduced his ministry with a quotation from Isa. 61:1-2 (Luke 4:16-20), saw Isaiah's "Suffering Servant" as a model for his life and ministry. The disciples might never have

understood Jesus if not for Isaiah's servant imagery. Even with that scriptural testimony, they struggled long and hard to understand a God who suffered.

Verses from the Servant Songs are quoted verbatim eight times in the New Testament, and apparent allusions to the texts are found another eighteen times.

In sum, from Isaiah's perspective, God had chosen the Hebrews to live in covenant as God's representatives in the world, living obediently as a light to the nations, calling others to trust in Yahweh, too. Through the centuries, it became apparent that Jacob-Israel (indicating the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel) was either incapable or unwilling to live out that calling. The servant in Isaiah, then, can be seen both as the people who failed and as the one who would ultimately accomplish what the Hebrews could not.