



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 52:13-15; 1 Peter 1:10-12

"Isaiah: The Startling Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] There are five Sundays in June and I expect, Lord willing, to be here for all of the five and for these five Sundays, I want to give five messages on Isaiah chapter 52, verse 13 through chapter 53, verse 12, which is the golden passion of the Old Testament evangelist, as Polycarp, one of the church fathers, called it. In our studies in Isaiah on Monday nights, we have progressed to Isaiah chapter 46 in our series. But, when we treat this section in our next section of lessons in the fall, we will have to cover this section very rapidly and it is not doing justice to one of the great passages in the Bible to treat it that way.

And so, for the month of June, I want to study this great prophecy of Christ, perhaps, the greatest of all of the Old Testament. And we will devote each one of the Sundays to it taking up one of the divisions each Sunday until we finish the last Sunday in June. So will you turn with me now to Isaiah chapter 52 and listen as I read verses 13, 14, and 15 and then we shall turn to a passage in the New Testament. Isaiah chapter 52 and verse 13,

"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astounded at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man,

and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; (I would just like to comment that think while a case may be made for the rendering of the Hebrew word as "sprinkle" that startle or astonish is probably more accurate, "So shall he startle many nations.") the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. (Now I want you to turn with me to a passage in the New Testament in 1 Peter chapter 1 and will you listen as I read verses 10 through 12; 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 10 through verse 12. This is a comment of Peter upon the prophets and their wrestlings with their own prophecies in Old Testament times. Peter writes in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 10) Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand (That is before Jesus Christ's coming) the sufferings of Christ, and the glory (The Greek text has the plural, the glories) that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

May God bless the reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee that we are able to approach Thee through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. We thank Thee that he is the Old Testament Messiah and the New Testament Messiah. That he has come the first time and has accomplished the work of redemption and that he shall come a second time and startle the nations who have not turned to him. We thank Thee for the glorious redemption that has been accomplished in which, by the grace of God and the ministry of the Spirit, we have come to see and to understand and to love. And, Father, we pray that through the ministry of the word today

in this meeting, that if there are those here who have not yet come to know the Messiah, may today be the day when they turn to him. May, O God, the Holy Spirit use the things of Jesus Christ to the conversion of the souls of those who are without him. So, Lord, we pray that Thou wilt minister to us. We pray that our hearts may be open to the word and we pray that we may be responsive and that we shall listen and allow Thee to speak to us not intruding our own thoughts, but listening to the thoughts of God.

We thank Thee for each one present in this auditorium and we pray, O Lord, that all of the needs and interests and all of the problems and perplexities that crowd in upon our lives may be related to Jesus Christ. And we pray that through the contemplation of the will of God for us and the affairs of our lives that we may find the divine solution to them whether we are young or old. We thank Thee for the young people who are here and for their interest and love for Jesus Christ. And, Lord, for some who may be here who may not know him, may their young hearts be attune to Thy voice and may they listen and respond while Thou do the great work of the new birth in our hearts.

And, Lord, we thank Thee for this country in which we live, for its leadership, for President Nixon, his cabinet, his administration. We pray Thy blessing upon them. Guide and direct us in these critical days, days in which we have problems abroad and problems at home. We pray for wisdom and guidance.

We thank Thee for the men who are serving us and protecting us in the armed forces. Lord, minister to them and, O God, we pray that Thou wilt work out Thy purpose in the lives of these young people. We pray that the gospel of Jesus Christ may go forth in our armed services through the chaplains and through the Christians and may many be reached for Jesus Christ amidst the blood and the death and the carnage of war.

We know, Lord, that Thy hand is upon the affairs of our life and while there are many things that we do not understand, we know that Thou art in control. We know, too, that man's heart has turned against Thee and that the responsibility for the condition of the world does not lie at Thy door, but at ours. So we commit ourselves to Thee and

we commit the church of Jesus Christ to Thee and we pray Thy blessing upon it. Build it up today through the addition of those whom Thou hast brought to Thyself and strengthen us through the preaching of the word of God. Bless every faithful servant of the word. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today, the first in our series on Isaiah chapter 52, verse 13 through chapter 53, verse 12 is, "The Startling Christ." The most critical problem of life is not the universal prevalence of war. It is not the increasing violence of the age in which we live. It is not the rampant immorality and license of our sex-mad 20th Century, nor the generation gap, nor the division that exists in the Christian churches. It is the age-old moral problem, how can a just God declare sinful man to be righteous? It is the problem that Job expressed a long time ago when he said, "I know it is so of a truth, but how should a man be just with God?" That is really the problem.

The Apostle Paul lived in the 1st Century, a century that had its problems. There were, according to Gibbon's estimate, sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire. The apostle said nothing about the banishment of slavery. He attacked the problem that is uppermost in the heart and mind of God and that is, how should a man be just with God? In other words, while there were social, and economic, and political problems, the apostle did not feel that these problems were the primary ones. The primary one is this age-old moral problem that we are talking about and from the standpoint of God, this is THE problem. And, of course, I feel, and I think the Bible teaches this, that if this problem is settled, then there is an opportunity and there is, perhaps, some indication that we may expect a solution to some of the others problems that exist. But, if this basic one is not settled, then we have little hope for the successful resolution of the other problems.

The Prophet Isaiah, the Old Testament evangelist, he has been called, in this great section, which has been called by the early church father, Polycarp, the golden passional of the Old Testament evangelist, sets forth the key to this problem in his prophecy of the

Suffering Servant of Jehovah. But who is this servant about which Isaiah speaks? Scholarship has offered not a few answers of which there are I think three leading ones. Some have said the Suffering Servant is the nation Israel and that when we read this passage and read, "Behold my servant shall deal prudently or prosper" that we are to think of the nation Israel as the servant of God.

Now it is true that in Isaiah's prophecy, Isaiah does refer to Israel as the servant of God. He does this in chapter 41. He does it later on probably in chapter 49 and so, this interpretation surely has some merit to it. It is the view of many later Rabbis both circumcised and uncircumcised, but if Israel is referred to by this prophecy then these things must be true of Israel. Israel must have been an innocent sufferer because the sufferer who is called the servant of Jehovah is an innocent sufferer.

We read, for example, in chapter 53 and verse 9, "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." But this is obviously contrary to Isaiah's view of Israel in the other parts of his prophecy. For example, in the very first chapter of the book when he refers to Judah and Jerusalem, he says this regarding the nation, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."

Now it is obvious from this that Israel is not an innocent sufferer and yet the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, as presented in Isaiah 52 and 3 is an innocent sufferer. Furthermore, Israel must have been a voluntary sufferer for the suffering of the Servant of Jehovah is voluntary. If you compare the passages that have to do with the servant, you will discover that he speaks about himself as giving his back to the spiders. It was voluntary. Israel has never been a voluntary sufferer and, particularly, in her great suffering times such as the exile or the exile of the present day when they have been scattered to the four corners of the earth.

Furthermore, Israel must have made a substitutionary atonement because when one thing that comes through as we read Isaiah 52 and 3 is the fact that the Suffering Servant of Jehovah has accomplished a work that is substitutionary. I think if you were to read this without any indication of man's views upon the passage, you would probably reach the conclusion that substitutionary atonement is referred to as many as almost twenty times. For example, let's read the 4th verse of chapter 53,

"Surely he (the servant) hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (Verse 5) 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."

Now it is evident from this that the servant has made a substitutionary atonement and if that is so, then it can hardly be a reference to Israel. I would also like to ask my friends in Israel, and I do have friends in Israel, why is it if this chapter has had to do with Israel and there is no question about it, why is it that it is omitted in the synagogue readings? Why of all the passages this one should be omitted, but it is omitted. If the interpretation is so obviously that of Israel, why not read it in the synagogue? Why has it been called the torture chamber of the Rabbis? Well, the reason is that the interpretation of the servant as Israel has never been able to be convincing and, consequently, I think it is not to be held.

Not long ago I was reading an interpretation by a leading Jewish scholar of Isaiah 53. He dismissed the interpretation as "of Israel" and pointed out some very cogent reasons why the view of many of the later Rabbis was wrong, but then he went on to suggest that it was a man. Not a leper, as some have suggested nor any martyr, but Isaiah the prophet himself. Professor Orlinsky, who is professor of Bible at Hebrew

Union University, is a very accomplished scholar. A man who has great ability and I respect his scholarship. I do not think, however, that his interpretation is correct. I do not think that when the prophet says, "Behold my servant" he is speaking of himself. If that's so then Isaiah as Israel must have been an innocent sufferer. He must have been a voluntary sufferer. He must have given himself as a substitutionary atonement.

Now, of course, it is easy to see how Isaiah might have given his life and that that might have benefited Israel. But, it is impossible to see how he could have been an innocent sufferer in the light of the fact that Isaiah himself, in his 6th chapter of the 5th verse of his prophecy speaks of himself in this way, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

I think if you had brought Isaiah to the bar of judgment in solving the question of the interpretation and if you had asked Isaiah, "Isaiah, are you the innocent sufferer, the servant of Jehovah?" He would have been utterly astounded that anyone could possibly believe that as a result of the reading of his prophecy. And so, consequently, without dealing in all of the minutia of the various interpretations, I suggest to you that the true interpretation of Isaiah chapter 52, verse 13 through chapter 53, verse 12 is the interpretation that refers this part of the prophecies concerning the servant of Jehovah to the Messiah himself.

Now there is strong support for this interpretation and as we study this month, I hope that it will become even stronger. I think it will. But, for example, let me just make these comments. This was the view of the ancient Rabbis. In fact, it was so the view of the ancient Rabbis that when the Targum, the paraphrase of the Old Testament in Hebrew was written and read, it was read in the synagogue in those days in this way. Chapter 52, verse 13 read, and this is what was read commonly in the synagogues in our Lord's time, "Behold my servant the Messiah shall deal prudently." In the Targum those words are there "the *Mashiach*" it is the Messiah and that is the way it was understood.

But you see, the Christians came along and the Christians used this. They said Isaiah 52 and 53 has to do with the Messiah. Let's look at what it says about the Messiah. Then they compared those facts with the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and they tallied perfectly and the early Jewish men found themselves at a great disadvantage in discussion of the truths of the word of God. And so, later the Rabbis abandoned the interpretation of Isaiah 53 as a reference to the Messiah. And finally, by the time the Hebrew commentator Rashi appeared, he said that this was not the interpretation. It did not have to do with the Messiah and gave it another interpretation. In other words, the polemics caused the change in interpretation, I believe. I cannot prove that. At least history seems to suggest that.

But now, it's interesting to note that after that time, after the time of Rashi, who lived around the 12th Century, after his time the Rabbis have gone back, in many cases, to an interpretation of Isaiah 52 and 53 as a reference to the Messiah. But they, of course say he's not Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah to come. And so, most orthodox men today who believe the Bible would believe that this is a reference to the Messiah, but the Messiah to come not the Messiah who has come.

As a Christian, I believe that this is a reference to the Messiah, but I believe it is a reference to the Messiah who has come. And I also believe it is a reference to the Messiah who shall come, for the Messiah who has come and the Messiah who shall come are one in the same person, Jesus of Nazareth, revealed in his first coming as Isaiah sets him forth in the earlier part of this prophecy, revealed in his second coming as he is also set forth in certain parts of this prophecy. In fact, I think if the man of Nazareth, the Son of God, be not visible in these three verses, and in the 12 or 15 verses, we could add, they are as dark as midnight itself. And, consequently, I accept the view that these passages have to do with Jesus of Nazareth and I think as we go along we're going to see that that does satisfy the facts of the context and the requirements of the interpretation of the passage.

But, I want you to turn with me to a passage in the New Testament and we're going to look at our Lord's own interpretation for just a moment because, of course, for the Christian what our Lord says is the ultimate authority. This is because we know him to be the Son of God by virtue of his ministry, by virtue of his miracles, by virtue of his death and resurrection.

Now turn with me to Luke chapter 22. Luke chapter 22 and I'm going to read a few verses beginning with verse 35 through verse 37 and I want you to turn this up for yourself for two reasons. Number one, I want you to look at it and number two; I want to take a drink of water while you're finding it [Laughter]. I hope my voice is not disturbing to you this morning. I'm trying to keep from getting excited and it's going to be difficult with a great prophecy like this, but if I do my voice will probably go entirely. Some of you, I know, are hoping I do and we'll get out early. Well, I hope you found Luke now.

I was telling the congregation at 8:30 that I was preaching this last week in Iowa and I had a women's Bible class on Wednesday morning. And I told the class that I would like to speak to them for a few minutes (Forty-five, preacher's language, few minutes) forty-five minutes [Laughter] about Pontius Pilate. And I said, "Would you turn with me in the Bible to the Gospel of John?" And one lady was there and she turned in her Bible and she began to look for John and I went through my introduction and she was still looking for John. And I went through my first point and she was still looking for John and finally, after about the middle of the second point, she looked back to the index. And I thought as I was going along, "Well, now surely she'll find it now" and she looked at the index and she puzzled over the index. And I got over the rest of the second point while she was reading the index trying to find, I guess, the Gospel of John. And, anyway, I completed the message and the conclusion and finally she closed the Bible. She just gave up. The Gospel of John was not in her Bible [Laughter]. Now have you found Luke chapter 22 and verse 35,

"And he said unto them, 'When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?' And they said, 'Nothing.' Then said he unto them, 'But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his bag (you have scrip): and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.' For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, and he was reckoned among the transgressors."

Now that statement "and he was reckoned among the transgressors" comes from Isaiah chapter 53, verse 12 near the climax of the great servant of Jehovah prophecy. Jesus refers to Isaiah 53. And then notice the last words of that sentence "for the things concerning me." The things concerning me have an end. In other words, it is Jesus' interpretation that Isaiah 52 and 53 has to do with him, the things concerning me. So when the prophecy begins by Isaiah, "Behold my servant" we could add with the paraphrases of the Old Testament, "Behold my servant, the Messiah, Jesus shall deal prudently." That would be a proper interpretation.

Now let's look at the verse which begins with verse 13, this prophecy which begins with verse 13, "Behold". Now if you read Isaiah 52 and the preceding chapters, you will discover this. The prophet who lived back in the 7th Century before our Lord, has by the Holy Spirit taken on about a hundred and fifty years in the latter part of this book and he writes of the deliverance of the children of Israel from the captivity, which was for them at that time still future. And he says that the man who is going to deliver them from this captivity is a man by the name of Cyrus the Persian. And, very startlingly, he calls Cyrus the Persian the messiah. He is Israel's Messiah in the sense that he is the one who shall save them from the Babylonian captivity. He will allow them to go back to the land.

Now that all came to pass and Isaiah writes against that historical background. But Isaiah knows by the Spirit of God that Israel is going into a captivity greater than the

Babylonian captivity in the future. Moses had prophesied of it in the Old Testament. And so, Isaiah writes against the background of the scattering of Israel to the four corners of the earth, which began with seventy A.D. and the capture of Jerusalem and which, in a sense, has not ended even at the present day.

Isn't it interesting that wherever you go, there you shall find the Jew? He has been scattered by God to the four corners of the earth. He has, of course, accomplished a great deal of good for man in the fact that he has been scattered. We who are Gentiles would surely recognize that, but he is under the judgment of God. It is the only explanation that satisfies all of the requirements of the experience of the Jewish people. For which a true Christian, of course, bleeds because of the fact that he does not realize it is divine discipline, but he has been scattered to the four corners of the earth. But the Bible also states that in the future, Israel is to be brought back into their land and being brought back into their land, they are going to be delivered with a spiritual salvation as well through the ministry of the Messiah, we believe, Jesus Christ.

Now Isaiah against the background of the deliverance from the Babylonian captivity often leaps into the future and writes of that deliverance from the four corners of the earth. And he has just been speaking of it in the preceding context, but now in verse 13 of chapter 52, he speaks of the one who shall accomplish this great deliverance, it is my servant, the Messiah.

Now as you look at this prophecy which begins at verse 13 and concludes with verse 12 of chapter 53, fifteen verses, you will discover that this prophecy forms five strophes, five sections, each of three verses each. They are easy to see. Verses 13 through 15 is the first, verse 1 through 3 is the second, 4 through 6 is the third, 7 through 9 is the fourth, 10 through 12 is the fifth. Five strophes and we'll handle the five strophes in our five Sundays.

Notice also that the first few words of each one of the strophes is not only the beginning of the strophe, but it is the theme of the strophe, "Behold my servant" is the

theme of the first strophe. "Who hath believed" is the theme of the second, the puzzle of Jewish unbelief; verse 7, "Surely he hath born our griefs" the substitutionary atonement and so on, through the five strophes. So we're going to look at the first strophe and this first verse sets forth Messiah's exaltation, "Behold." Now that's a good way to begin.

When I read a book, I'm very peculiar. Of course, when I'm not reading a book, I'm peculiar too. But, when I'm reading a book, I act very peculiarly. I cannot read a book any longer without a pen with me and also without a ruler and I always have it with me. And when I read, if I run across something that is important, I underline it and I do it with the ruler. I don't these lines that go all over the page, you know. They're not neat. And so, I do it with a ruler.

And then if I run across something that is a little more important than that, I underline it and I mark a vertical line in the side column to show that's a little more important. That's my language. And if it's very important, I underline it, draw the vertical line in the margin and then I put the two little letters N.B. And if you took Latin, you'll remember that that is the abbreviation of *nota*. First conjugation verb, remember? *Nota bene*; note well, that means something very important that's usually reserved for a joke the author tells [Laughter].

Now God, of course, did not write the Bible with underlinings, with comments in the margin, nor with little N.B.'s throughout. He did it in a better way no doubt. He had his prophets use certain words that drew attention to the subject and Isaiah is one who more than once uses the little word behold, *hinneh*, behold. Look it means, look my servant shall prosper, look. So it is something that is important. It's God's *ecce homo*, "Behold the man who is my servant."

Now I want you to notice also that it states that he is my servant. Now this title is as honorable as it is condescending. The servant of Jehovah is the one who conducts the affairs of the household of God. In the church of Jesus Christ, the head of the church is Jesus Christ. The head of the church is not in Rome. The head of the church is not in

Nashville. The head of the church is not in Montreat. The head of the church is not in New York City. The head of the church is not the board of elders. The head of the church is not the deacons. The head of the church is Jesus Christ. He is the head of the church.

Now in the Old Testament when God referred to him who conducted the affairs of the household of God, he said, "Behold my servant, my servant." Jesus is the one who conducts the affairs of God's household. Now that term servant is a representative term. He means that he serves God for others. It's an official term. In the New Testament when we say that Jesus is the Redeemer or in the Old Testament if we say the Messiah is the Redeemer, he is a person who acts for a group of people. The Lord Jesus has acted for us, for his own. When he died, he did not just die, he died as a substitute and in the mind of God, others with him. He was our substitute as Paul said, "We thus judge that if one died for one then all died."

If I were standing about Calvary's cross and if I understood then what I understand now, I could say, "I see Jesus of Nazareth dying. He's the Servant of Jehovah. He's the Redeemer." I also see myself dying for I die in my substitute. He is a representative man. The things that have happened to him he has done for his people. So when he died, he died for me and I died. When he was placed in the grave, he was buried. He was buried for me and I was buried in the mind of God. When he was raised from the dead, I was raised in the mind of God and having ascended to the right hand of God there am I together with him, as Paul puts, for he saw this representative concept throughout the word of God. "Behold my servant shall deal prudently." The storms and tempests which surround the church only serve to illustrate the wisdom and power of the great servant of God who has accomplished the work of redemption for us. He is the official servant of God who for the redeemed, for God's people, accomplishes these great works.

Now the text says, "Behold my servant shall deal prudently." I'd like to change that. That word rendered here, "deal prudently" can mean deal prudently. It is not a mistranslation. It is simply a case of a word that had more than one meaning. I think the context here in the light of some parallel passages would indicate that it should be translated prosper, "Behold my servant shall prosper" and I would like to take it that way.

What that means then is simply that the captain shall triumphantly conclude the endless covenant. When Jesus dies, the blood of the everlasting covenant is shed and it is settled forever that those who are in him shall be with him throughout all eternity. Now I better not get excited because this is a great text and I might lose my voice, but let's look on, "Behold my servant shall prosper." He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.

Now Peter said, in the passage that I read, that the prophets searched the things that they wrote in the Old Testament searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them as they wrote, did signify, when he the Spirit of Christ testified of the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories, which shall be after these things. Sufferings and glories the prophets wrote about the Messiah that he should suffer. He should have sufferings and that he should have glories. Now look, the text says, "Behold my servant shall prosper. He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high."

Now we could understand this as if it were simply nothing more than a strong way of saying the Messiah shall be exalted. Or, if we wish, we might see some more detail in it than that. One of the older interpreters, Rudolph Schuerter has said that these three words represent three aspects of our Lord's exaltation and many commentators agree with him. It surely is true to Scripture. Whether the prophet understood it or not is beside the point. We cannot be sure the Holy Spirit of God intended that we should understand it this way, but it is true to fact that Jesus rose from the dead. That he ascended to the right hand of the throne of God and that he is now seated there.

And with that in mind, let's look at these three words, "Behold my servant shall prosper. He shall be exalted." That's the Hebrew word *room* and in the form *harum*.

Now room ordinarily means to rise. Let's render it that way, "My servant shall prosper. He shall rise. He shall rise. My servant shall rise and be extolled." The word in the form of *nasa* occurs here. It is the passive of a word that means to bear or to lift, "My servant shall rise. He shall be lifted up, lifted up. He shall ascend and he shall be high exceedingly." *Gababh me'od*. Now *gababh* means to be high and *me'od* is an adverb that stresses the height, high exceedingly. So he shall rise from the dead. He shall ascend to the right hand of the Father. He shall be seated there and be high exceedingly in his session at the right hand of the Father.

Now I say, I cannot prove this interpretation, but it's true to holy Scripture and it does seem remarkable that the prophet Isaiah uses the three different verbs to describe the exaltation of the Messiah. I'm inclined to think that that's what he had in mind. Someone might say at this point, "Oh, but Jesus is not exalted today. He's trodden under foot by most men." Ah, just wait a while. Just wait a while. And, furthermore, from the standpoint of the Scriptures and the mind of God, he has already been exalted, but the world shall discover it at his second coming.

Now at this point, we turn to the 14th verse, "as", look at the beginning of verse 15, so. These two verses are compared or contrasted by the prophet, "As many were astounded at thee so shall he startle many nations." Just as they were astounded at Jesus in his first coming, so shall he astound them at his second coming. How was he an astonishment in his first coming? Well, of course, you know the sufferer is always the perplexity of humanity. We can never really understand suffering unless we understand the Bible. The understanding of suffering goes back to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. The reason man has never solved this problem philosophically is because he's never been willing to bow before the revelation of God in the Book of Genesis.

Yesterday, I was coming down on a well known airline from Des Moines, Iowa back to Dallas and for the third time in a month, I heard, before we got off the ground an announcement from the pilot. And I'll tell you this, when you're in a plane and the pilot

gives you an announcement on the ground, beware. You don't have to listen to what he says, it's bad. It's bad news. If your up in the air and he speaks that's all right, but if he speaks on the ground that's bad. And I was sitting in Wichita, Kansas of all places. If there's somebody from Wichita here, please pardon me, but that looks like west Texas [Laughter].

And so, I was sitting there and anxious to get home. I had lots of things to do in the afternoon, primarily get my hair cut. You'll notice I didn't do it [Laughter]. And so, the announcement came, "We're awfully sorry, but we're going to have to be here for six or eight hours and we suggest you get off the plane and go in and make some other arrangements."

And so, I rushed off, having had this experience so often, I know that the thing to do is get off that plane in a hurry and get at the front of the line. A hundred people, you know, you can wait for hours. And so, I rushed off the plane and as I got out, I remembered I had forgotten my book [Laughter]. And so, I was the last in the line practically. That's what you get for trying to take advantage of the others who were not so intelligent as I [Laughter]. So I finally got in line and as I was standing in the line, a woman turned to me and said, "Isn't your face familiar?" I said, "Yes, to me." [Laughter] Now I take that back, I really didn't say that [Laughter]. I thought, (she said that, however) and I looked at her and her face was a little familiar too. And it finally turned out she was an old friend from Dallas who had been out of the city for fifteen or so years. And we had a good discussion as we, of course, I got on a horse from Wichita and came into Dallas [Laughter] and we stopped at Ponca City and Enid and Oklahoma City and Lorton and we waited in Lorton. That's an interesting experience, too [Laughter], and we finally got in, in time to eat supper, every barber shop closed.

But during the course of the plane ride, I had a very interesting conversation with this young lady whom I had known many years ago and she went on to describe the conversion of her son. Her husband is a mission executive and their son was not a

Christian and he went out to Vietnam. Went through the Vietnam War and was tremendously troubled by the suffering in Vietnam. And then when he came home, he seemed to get worse and worse and finally became an enforcer for gamblers in a city in the east. And any of you know who know anything about enforcing know, of course, that that means that he's the representative of the gambler to go out to be sure that you pay your debts to the gambler and it's a pretty grim existence. And he finally drifted to that and finally he came to Christ, but he said that one of the things that puzzled him was, "Why is there suffering?"

Well, of course, the reason for suffering is sin. That's why suffering exists. And it's God's way of trying to get the attention of the human race because if we didn't have it, he should never get the attention of many of us at all. And so, they were astounded at Jesus' suffering, but his suffering is related to the fact that he bore our sins. And so, they were astonished at his lowly birth. Think of it, the God-man born in a manger how astonishing. They were astonished at his life, a lowly carpenter who stood at a bench for thirty years before he began his ministry. They were astonished at his death, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And they were astonished at his burial, but they shall be astonished at his second coming.

And so, we reading the 15th verse after reading of Messiah's degradation, here we read of his manifestation to the nations, "Just as many were astonished at Thee his vision was so marred" that marvelous marring by the way is a reference to him on the cross not in his life. It was when he hung on Calvary's cross with the crown of thorns jammed down over his head and the blood down his face that he was marred into such a degree that he didn't even look like a man any longer.

Of course, the Christians love the crown of thorns, don't they? I do. Do you know why? Because when I read my Bible I begin in the Book of Genesis and I read that when man sinned, one of the punishments for man's sin was the fact that the earth would be cursed and it should bring forth thorns and thistles. And when the Roman soldiers

took the crown of thorns and took it and constructed it and put it upon our Lord Jesus Christ's head, it was their vesicle symbolic (unknown to them), symbolic way of saying, "This man shall bear the curse for sin." And so, all who are true Christians have been tremendously impressed by the figure of the Son of God with the crown of thorns upon his head for as Paul said, "He hath redeemed me from the curse of the law being made a curse for me."

And so, whenever I see our Lord Jesus Christ with the picture and the crown of thorns upon his head, I say, "Thank God he died for me." He took my curse and down through the centuries, he passes. Jesus of Nazareth still wearing the crown of thorns and his followers and servants desire no better diadem than that. His visage was so marred, but just as they were astonished at his first coming, so shall he startle many nations at his second coming. Kings shall shut their mouths at him. Khrushchev, Stalin, Linden, whoever is in authority, who has never responded to the claims of Jesus Christ (I make no judgment upon these men, just using them as examples), but the kings of the earth who have left the man of Nazareth out of their thinking, then they shall be utterly astonished when they see Jesus of Nazareth returning again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory so shall he startle many nations.

Well, the first strophe is over. The nation shall cry with the dying Julian, the apostate, "Thou hast conquered O Galilean. O thorn crowned King of Calvary; kings shall be Thy courtiers yet." There is another side. They who stumbled at his first coming are startled at his second, but some worship. Those who believe worship, how about you?

There are a thousand reasons why you should rush into the arms of our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate deity and say, "How can I resist Thee now?" There are a thousand reasons why you should rush into his presence and say, "O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou didst bear the curse for me and I take Thee as my Savior." May God the Holy Spirit speak to your heart and may, as you ponder the words of God, and as the Holy Spirit brings you to that conviction that Jesus is the Messiah and bears away sin and offers true

freedom, the forgiveness of sins, justification of life, come to him and receive his salvation. Say, "Thank you, Lord, for dying for me. I take you as mine." May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion of the Holy Spirit be in abide with all who know him in sincerity. And, O Father, for those who may be...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]