

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 18TH–20TH, 2025 // RESURRECTION WEEKEND

LOOKING FORWARD (ISAIAH 53) CULTURE IN THE 8TH CENTURY B.C.

The culture Isaiah lived through was marked with political upheaval, social injustice, idolatry, corruption, decadence, and moral and ethical decline even amongst the people of God.

- The Jews had become very apathetic in their faith. Their **lips were close, but their hearts were far away** (Isaiah 29:13).

“WHO HAS BELIEVED...?” (VS. 1–3)

God has always been available to people who sought Him, but Isaiah told of a time when a Savior would build the bridge to a more intimate relationship with our Creator.

- Many wouldn't believe in the Savior because He came in the form of a “suffering servant,” not in the form of prevailing culture.

SUFFERING ON OUR BEHALF (VS. 4–9)

All of us have rebelled and “went astray like sheep” to go “our own way.” **In our selfishness and sin, we hurt ourselves and others.**

- **Jesus came to suffer and pay the price for the evil we've done so we can live in peace, be reconciled with God and others, and share an eternity with Him.**

“PLEASED TO CRUSH HIM SEVERELY” (V. 10)

Jesus was to be a “guilt offering” to pay for the offenses the people (us) committed against God. God the Father was “pleased” to offer up His Son as a sacrifice because this would be the way broken people would find healing.

- In essence, **God loved us so much He was willing to suffer and serve mankind.**

GOD ACKNOWLEDGED THE SUFFERING (V. 11)

Isaiah writes that Jesus would go through “anguish,” but that will give those suffering in this world the “light” to find the means to have their “iniquities” forgiven and to be saved and justified (made good) by God.

- The knowledge of Jesus' suffering gives weight to the phrase, “God loves you.”

A COMING SAVIOR OFFERS PEOPLE HOPE (V. 12)

V. 12 foretells many coming to God because Jesus “willingly submitted to death... bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels.”

- **Through Jesus we are not left to save or fix ourselves. We have hope in the fact that God loves us and goes to great lengths to help us!**

PROPHECY FULFILLED (MATTHEW 28:1–7) UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN... (ISAIAH 9:6)

Isaiah not only prophesied about the crucifixion of Jesus, but also His birth. The Gospels then gave us a detailed account of the resurrection of Jesus.

- Of course, Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus and what that means for those who put their faith in Him.

CULTURE DURING THE TIME OF JESUS

Rome was a polytheistic society but also moved into Imperial Cultism. It was a time of great innovation, but also elitism, decadence, and extreme sexual deviance.

- Judaism had become legalistic and cold. The people of God had become either mechanical or apathetic to a relationship with God.

INTERVENING AT AN INTERESTING POINT IN HISTORY

God decided to personally intervene at an interesting moment in history. First, the innovations of Rome enabled the message Jesus brought to travel efficiently to the entire world. Secondly, the evil culture at the end of time is often referred to as a “revived” Roman empire (Daniel 2:41–43).

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

It is unlikely the Roman Empire will literally revive. The Bible indicates that there will be another society/ culture very similar to Rome's when Jesus decides to return for His people.

- Essentially, there will be one more decadent, hedonistic, global power that defies God before His return.

WHAT MAKES THE PRESENT UNIQUE? BUT EVERY ERA HAS ITS SHARE OF EVIL

One can make the argument that every society from the beginning of civilization until now has rebelled in some way against the commands of God.

- This is true, but there is one stark difference between the cultures of the past and what we are experiencing today.

THE ALARMING RISE OF “NONES”

Atheism is a fairly new belief system. Though there are accounts of skeptics in ancient history, it has only been in the last 400 years that it has become a recognized belief.

- In January 2024, the P.R.C. reported “nones” are now the largest single group in America, representing 31% of all adults.

“THE FOOL SAYS... ‘THERE'S NO GOD’” (PSALM 14).

Worship of anything other than the biblical God “benefits no one” (Isaiah 44:9), and to believe there is nothing greater than ourselves is arrogant and very “foolish.”

- The present is unique because **we have crossed into the extremely dangerous realm of believing we're the highest power.**

IT HAS KIND OF HAPPENED BEFORE, BUT NOT REALLY

There are other cultures where people have proclaimed to be gods, but it was not in the complete absence of other gods.

- We live in a time of **moral relativism, individual truth, and defiance of natural order. These ideas reveal a people who believe nothing is above them.**

THE ESCALATION OF EVIL

Every era has had its evil, but when a large portion of a society turns its back on the idea of God or **claims belief in God but doesn't live in obedience to His commands and principles**, that society has escalated into a uniquely dark mindset. **Have we become a people who think we can fix ourselves?**

AN INCREASING NEED: THE ESCALATION OF EVIL JESUS WILL RETURN (MATTHEW 24)

Jesus promised He would return and that the world would be in “great distress” (v. 21). This tells us that evil and opposition to Jesus and His followers will escalate.

- Even worse than the distress of the world will be the ramifications of not allowing Jesus to save us.

PRESENT AND FUTURE RAMIFICATIONS

After today, we have all heard that God invites us to be saved and changed by the same power that resurrected Jesus. If we reject Him, we are left to fend for ourselves.

- **How have humanity's abilities worked out in the past? How are they working out now? Are we where we want to be?**

WE NEED THE RESURRECTION MORE AND MORE

The resurrection of Jesus is not just an event we celebrate—it is a lifestyle we are invited to live! His resurrection promises **our spiritual resurrection now (that aids us in every facet of life)** and **promises a perfect existence with a Savior who loves us ridiculously!**

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

- Our age resembles many aspects of Isaiah's and Rome's. The stark difference is that many are not even bothering to look beyond themselves for direction.
- Even many who profess Jesus have adopted beliefs and actions that only temporarily help and give a false sense of security.

WE HAVE TO BE HONEST WITH OURSELVES

- Where do we put our trust and hope: ourselves, the government, money, success, sex, beauty, affirmation, culture, entertainment, or some other product of a confused society? Is that pursuit giving us what we need? Or have we been left wanting more?

IF WE TRULY HAVE A DESIRE FOR MORE

- Maybe the verbiage has become cliché, but it is still true; **God loves you and places more value on you than anything else in the universe.**
- The real question is **do we have a real desire (not just lips but a heart) to explore a relationship with our Creator?**
- We must accept the gift of salvation through **humbly submitting to God.** This leads to a demonstration of **faith by confession and repentance, the pursuit of truth, obedience, and putting effort into a personal relationship** with Jesus. In this, we are restored.

WHAT ABOUT NEXT WEEK?

- The need for a Savior is increasing because time is getting shorter, and we are not promised tomorrow (James 4:13–15).
- **What will we do with the knowledge and time we have been given?** Will we respond or simply go back to a lifestyle that seems easier, but gives only temporary results?