Among Bible students, the Old Testament book of Isaiah is sometimes referred to as "The Gospel Of Isaiah" because in it there are several prophecies made about the "good news" that would come into the world, beginning in Israel, when the Messiah arrived. That "good news" did arrive, of course, through the person and the work of Jesus of Nazareth. All of this is revealed to us in the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, continuing into the book of Acts and the epistles that follow.

Amazingly, under the inspiration of Jehovah, Isaiah wrote his "gospel" some seven centuries - seven-hundred years - before the Messiah about Whom he had prophesied arrived. Though, among the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah wrote the largest volume of material, he was as handicapped in doing so as were all his "prophet-brothers" including Obadiah who wrote his little book of only one-chapter.

Under the inerrant inspiration of God, while being in a state of complete spiritual ignorance - "blindness" - as far as knowing how or precisely when the salvation of which they wrote would be offered, Isaiah and the authors of the other sixteen books of Old Testament prophecy nevertheless wrote on this subject that today has been fully and finally revealed to the entire human race in the Divine record that we know as the holy Scriptures.

Apostle Peter clearly addresses their "blindness" to what was to come. He wrote in 1 Peter 1:10-11, "Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully who prophesied of the grace that would come...searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."

"...sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow?" We are not surprised that those "sufferings" and "glories" are revealed in the New Testament; and, if we have any familiarity with the Old Testament neither are we surprised that they are recorded there. Both the "sufferings" and the "glories" of Christ are written in Isaiah's "gospel." Together, in one small passage of only three verses that comes at the end of one of the chapters in "The Gospel According To Isaiah," reference is made to them both.

Both the "sufferings" and the "glories" of Christ are appropriate subjects to address at the Table of the Lord on any Lord's Day. But in this meditation, we will consider only the "sufferings of Christ" for on this Table is Isaiah's prophesied Messiah's "body" and
"blood" that was "shed for many for the remission of sins." Both are evidences of His "sufferings" on the cross of Calvary. It is at this sacred Table that we remember the sacrifice He made for the sake of men as God's perfect, unblemished Lamb of God to save and redeem men who are subtly snatched and taken captive by the "evil one" beginning as early as Genesis 3 in the garden of Paradise. How would it be possible to "drink the cup of the Lord" or to "partake of the Lord's table" without reflecting upon the "sufferings of Christ?"

When using Isaiah's gospel to remember Him at this Table, it is to the fifty-third chapter that the saints of God most often turn. Sometimes it is the first six verses that are read; sometimes it's only verses four through six. Not often, but some dare take the time to read the entire chapter before giving some sort of "Lord's Supper Table Talk." It would be appropriate to read any part of this chapter at this time for it is best known as the chapter about Christ, the "Suffering Servant."

The chapter says so much about Him. He did have "no form or comeliness"; there was "no beauty" in Him that He should be desired; He was "despised and rejected by men"; He was "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" and as the "glories that would follow." But sandwiched in between verse 13 and verse 15 is a startling description of the Messiah's "sufferings." His "visage" - His appearance - would be "marred more than any other man." The Old King James Version says His appearance would "astonish" those who looked upon Him. The New International Version uses the word "appalled." There isn't much difference between the two. As one commentator wrote, His visual appearance to man would be so "astonishing," so "appalling," that those who witnessed His crucifixion and all that preceded it..."despised, and...not esteem[ed]."

Everything else written about Him in this chapter is likewise true. It is indeed an excellent passage of Scripture to read at His Table. But there is something that Isaiah wrote about Him before chapter fifty-three that is rarely, if ever, noticed; but, it is just as worthy to be read. It is something that Isaiah wrote in the fifty-second chapter.

It is what he said in verse 14: "...His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." Before and after verse 14 Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah about Whom he wrote would be successful in His mission when He finally arrived. He described that success as...not...
would be "struck dumb" ² by the way He looked. Following all the beatings and the scourging, His physical form would not appear to be human while nailed to the cross. He would be so disfigured that those who were able to behold the sight would not be able to speak. He would not resemble anything that was part of the human family.

What painter, what artist, what sculptor could ever capture on canvas with a brush or in marble with a knife what Isaiah prophesied? "...His visage - His appearance - was marred - disfigured, defaced, destroyed - more than the sons of men." And for what reason - why? What had He done to deserve to receive such treatment by those He created? In Apostle Peter's second sermon he described Jesus as "the Holy One and the Just," "the Prince of life"; the Hebrews' writer says He was "without sin." Peter went on to say that "those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets - that would include Isaiah - that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled." ³ Again, why?

The answer is simple and Isaiah answers it in the verses that follow in Isaiah 53: to bear "our griefs"; to carry our "sorrows": "for our transgressions": "for our iniquities": to heal us. It was entirely for us that He submitted Himself to His Father's plan for the redemption of the human race - for no other reason. It began way before crosses were ever imagined in men's evil minds; it began way before His cross was ever fabricated and then dropped with Him nailed to it into the hole that was dug for it atop Golgotha. It began way before Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit or before she was even born. It began way before any Old Testament writer foretold its event. It began way before any part of the Old Testament sacrificial system was inaugurated. It began "from the foundation of the world." ⁴ As far back as one's mind can go into eternity past and beyond, what took place at Calvary was predetermined by God for our sakes. How is it possible, how is it conceivable, that any of us who are the recipients of His saving grace can even entertain the thought of not meeting at this holy Table with Him each week and "do this in remembrance of Him?"

Unlike Isaiah or any of the other prophets who "inquired and searched carefully...what manner of time" the Messiah would come, we know what they didn't. Unlike Isaiah who could only see through his prophetic eyes the Messiah's appearance "marred more than any man," we read the sacred writ that testifies of the victorious risen Christ Who sits "at the right hand of the Majesty on high" ⁵ as the Lord and Savior of His beloved bride, the church, Who is coming again someday in our future for His beloved saints who faithfully remembered Him at His Table each Lord's Day. When that day comes, the mouths of men and nations who knew Him not will be shut. But the mouths of the saints will forever glorify Him because of the "sufferings" he endured for us.

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² Albert Barnes, Commentary on Isaiah, Volume 2, p. 256
³ Acts 3:14-15, 18
⁴ Revelation 13:8
⁵ Hebrews 1:3
Prayer

Our God and Father in heaven, help us at this Table to see through our eyes of faith the horrible, inexpressible, indescribable, inhumane suffering that was inflicted upon our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ, at the cross for our sakes. I fear that we are not able to comprehend it Father. We know of no one of the stature of Jesus of Nazareth who would be so willing to subject himself to the horrors of the cross for our sins. We praise You for His love for us while we were yet sinners. We eat this "loaf" and we drink this "cup" trying to fathom it all, but we are not able. It is too much for our finite minds to comprehend. It goes beyond what our feeble minds are able to grasp. We can only, by our faith in what has been written in your divine revelation, even believe all of this. We pray that how and what we do at this time in this act of worship will be acceptable to you. Forgive us of our ignorance and any failure we make to properly honor your only gotten Son and Lamb Whose death "takes away the sin of the world" including our very own. Bless this "loaf" and receive our "thanks" for this cup, we ask in the only "name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved," the name of Jesus, the Christ - Jesus, Isaiah's and our prophesied Messiah. Amen.

"Set for the defense of the gospel"