

**In Our Place**  
Isaiah 53:4-6  
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**Video: Christmas Connection**

Have you ever wondered what happened to Baby Jesus? He grew up and went to the Cross – *Baby Jesus is the same as Cross Jesus!*

I can remember playing with the Christmas characters in our family's nativity set when I was young. I was fascinated with the figurines but was never allowed to touch baby Jesus. In fact, in our family, He wasn't put in the manger *until* Christmas morning. The baby Jesus was always a big deal to me but in my waiting for His appearance, I'd get distracted by my presents, and then Jesus was put away with all the other decorations until He made a cameo appearance the following year.

I never fully grasped that the baby born in Bethlehem was also the Christ who died on the cross for my sins, was raised on the third day, ascended into heaven and is coming again to rule and reign.

We're concluding our series called, "Down to Earth: Christmas According to Isaiah."

We've learned that...

- *Jesus lights the way for those living in darkness.* (Isaiah 9:1-2)
- *Jesus is indescribably unique.* (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- *Jesus came down in order in order to lift us up.* (Isaiah 7:14)

Isaiah 53 is one of the most amazing chapters in the entire Bible. One commentator referred to it as "*the text upon which the rest of the Bible is a sermon.*" It's really the premier passage on biblical prophecy, quoted 41 times in the New Testament.

Written 700 years before Christ was born, these verses describe in great detail the life (1-4), death (5-8), burial (9) and exaltation (10-12) of Jesus Christ. We could sum up this section of Scripture with one word: *substitution*. At its core, substitution is "*a putting in place of another.*"

Here's a summary of the sermon: *"Because of grace, Jesus was born to die in our place."*

Listen to verses 4-6:

***"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."***

Through song and Scripture, we've celebrated the coming of Jesus at Christmas. Let's focus now on three reasons *why* He came.

**1. Jesus came to take our pain.** Verse 4 begins with the word, *"surely,"* which is the idea of something coming unexpectedly. It can also be translated as *"truly."* This word means that an amazing truth is about to be given. Here it is: He has *"borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,"* which means Jesus came to carry our deep despair and our sad sufferings. This phrase in Hebrew has the idea of lifting up and carrying away a heavy load.

Hebrews 2:18 says this about Jesus: *"For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted."* I'm reminded of the words to a song: *"What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear."*

**2. Jesus came to take our punishment.** Jesus was born to bear our sorrows, but He also came to be our sin bearer. We see this in verse 5: *"But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed."* The flesh of Jesus was pierced when He hung on the cross, with nails penetrating His hands and feet, and a spear slicing through His side. He went through that *"for"* our transgressions. On top of that, He was *"crushed,"* which means to be pulverized or beaten down *"for"* our iniquities, which refers to our guilt.

This is fleshed out further in 1 Peter 2:24: *"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed."* The punishment you and I deserved was placed upon Him so we can experience the peace the angels promised to the shepherds. This is

stated in a different way in Isaiah 53:10: ***“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief; when His soul makes an offering for guilt.”***

Christmas is important but it must lead us to the crucifixion. If Jesus wasn't born in Bethlehem, He couldn't have been crucified at Calvary.

One pastor puts it like this: *“Here's a side to the Christmas story that isn't often told: Those soft little hands, fashioned by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb, were made so that nails might be driven through them. Those baby feet, pink and unable to walk, would one day stagger up a dusty hill to be nailed to a cross. That sweet infant's head with sparkling eyes and eager mouth was formed so that someday men might force a crown of thorns onto it. That tender body, warm and soft, wrapped in swaddling clothes, would one day be ripped open by a spear. He was born to die.”*

On top of all this, think of the pain of crucifixion and the suffocating weight of our accumulated and repugnant sins.

When you consider Christmas, remember Christ came in order to die for your sins. His substitutionary death fully satisfied God's righteous and holy wrath. Jesus took our pain and our punishment in order to give us peace.

*Because of grace, Jesus was born to die in our place.*

**3. Jesus came to take our place.** Check out verse 6: ***“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*** Here we are compared to sheep, which is anything but a compliment. Notice that we ***“all”*** have gone astray, ***“every one”*** has turned to his own way. Psalm 119:176 says, ***“I have gone astray like a lost sheep.”***

The ***“Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*** The word ***“laid”*** means ***“to cause to strike with great force; to punish by violence.”*** The strong arm of the Lord came down on Jesus with great force as He judged our sin on the Savior's shoulders. The iniquity of us all fell upon our Substitute.

Substitution is a major theme in the Scriptures (I'm thankful for the insight of GotQuestions.org). Right after Adam and Eve sinned, God sacrificed an animal in order to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:21). God then gave His people the Law, which they continued to break. As a way to avoid the punishment, He granted them substitutes to pay the price for their sins, when a flawless animal would die in the sinner's place, allowing the sinner to go free.

The Passover vividly portrayed how a substitute saved people from slaughter when the only way to avoid the avenging angel was to have the blood of a perfect male lamb applied to the doorposts of their homes. God said in Exodus 12:13: ***“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”***

But Hebrews 10:4 says we have a problem, ***“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”*** The only acceptable offering is a perfect offering, so Jesus was able to pay the perfect price for our sins through His substitutionary sacrifice. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, He said these words in John 1:29: ***“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”***

John Stott writes, *“The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be. God sacrifices Himself for man and puts Himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone. God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.”*

Let’s say it like this: *The INNOCENT was punished as if guilty, that the guilty might be rewarded as if INNOCENT. We truly deserve the penalty and punishment, but God has poured out His wrath against sin on His own Son.*

There’s a progression of thought in this passage from *we* to *me* to *He* to *free*.

- **We.** I count 10 times that “we” or “our” or “us” is used. We are sinners in desperate need of saving. Tim Keller says, *“Christmas is the end of thinking you are better than someone else, because Christmas is telling you that you could never get to heaven on your own. God had to come to you.”*
- **Me.** Until I move from *we* to *me*, I won’t own my odious offenses against the Almighty. It’s one thing to say that every one’s a sinner, it’s another thing altogether to admit that *you* are a sinner. Look again at verse 6: ***“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned...”*** That’s *we*. Isaiah then individualizes the illustration: ***“Every one to his own way.”*** That’s *me*.
- **He.** The words, “He,” “Him,” “God,” “His,” and “Lord” are used 9 times in these verses. Jesus took my place as my substitute and made payment for my sins. He has carried all my griefs, every one of my transgressions, and all my iniquities. My sins struck the Substitute. I deserved death but He

died in my place. *I sinned and as my Substitute He paid the price for my sins.*

Notice again the use of the word “**for**” in verse 5. He did all this in our place, instead of us, as our substitute: “***But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities.***”

- **Free.** When I move from *we* to *me* and then to *He*, I can be *free*. I receive peace and pardon, forgiveness and freedom. The word “**peace**” is the Hebrew *shalom*, which refers to human wholeness. It’s more than just the absence of hostility. The only way to have freedom from your sin problem, or your substance abuse, or your selfishness, is to trust the Savior as your substitute.

*Because of grace, Jesus was born to die in our place.*

Let’s bring all this back to Christmas. Without Jesus becoming a baby and then dying in our place, we would never be saved from our sins. I like how Tim Challies puts it: “*The Incarnation is an especially joyful and important doctrine for Christians because, not only did God align with man, but through this alignment Jesus gained a human body that could in turn be sacrificed to endure God’s wrath. This was the only way that man could be saved.*”

Baby Jesus is the same as Cross Jesus. Jesus was born to die so you can be born again.

Maybe you think you don’t qualify because you’ve messed up too much. Listen. It doesn’t matter what you’ve done; what matters is what Jesus has done. There is grace for everyone. *Because of grace, Jesus took your place.*

When we consider Christmas, let’s see it as one scene in the unfolding narrative of God’s redemptive drama. While we moved from Christmas to Good Friday pretty quickly in this message, we actually shouldn’t skip over the Lord’s life. While it’s true He was born to die, He also was born to live so He could fulfill all the righteous requirements of the Law.

This began in Luke 2:22-24: “***And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’) and to offer a sacrifice***

*according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.’”* Why was Jesus circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day and why did Mary offer sacrifices for purification? God’s law commanded these things. In fact, we see the word “**Law**” used three times in this passage.

Why is this important? Because it shows the unflinching obedience of Jesus from the very beginning to the Father’s commands. There are only two ways to fulfill God’s Law – obedience or payment. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17: **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”** Romans 5:19 tells us that it was by His **“obedience the many will be made righteous.”**

Here’s a deep truth. Jesus fulfilled God’s Law twice. He perfectly obeyed *and* paid the penalty as if He hadn’t. Ryan Welsh writes: *“Notice that the Father didn’t send Christ to the cross as an infant, nor did He send Him to earth as a fully formed adult on Good Friday morning. He sent Christ into human history as an infant, not to die for decades, so that He could both live for our righteousness and also die for our sin.”*

Jesus Christ came to earth, lived the life we could not live, died a death we should have died, and was raised to new life so we can live forever.

Let’s consider some other connections between Christmas and the rest of the story...

- The angels appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:11) and angels appeared in the garden to announce His resurrection (Luke 24:4).
- It’s likely that Jesus was born in a cave and when He died, He was put in a tomb cut out of stone (Luke 23:53).
- The baby Jesus was wrapped in swaddling cloths (Luke 2:12), and the dead body of Jesus was wrapped in a linen shroud (Mark 15:46).
- One of the gifts of the wise men was myrrh (Matthew 2:11), a spice that was used by Nicodemus to prepare the body of Jesus for burial (John 19:39).

Listen to an excerpt of a story written by J. B. Phillips called, *“The Visited Planet.”*

*Once upon a time a young angel was being shown the splendors and glories of the universe by a senior and experienced angel...Finally he was shown...a small and*

*rather insignificant sphere turning very slowly on its axis. It looked as dull as a dirty tennis-ball to the little angel.*

*“I want you to watch that one particularly,”* said the senior angel, pointing with his finger. *“Well, it looks very small and rather dirty to me,”* said the little angel. *“What’s special about that one?”* *“That,”* replied his senior solemnly, *“is the Visited Planet.”* *“Visited?”* said the little one. *“You don’t mean visited by...?”*

*“Indeed, I do. That ball, which I have no doubt looks to you small and insignificant...has been visited by our young Prince of Glory.”* And at these words he bowed his head reverently. The little angel’s face wrinkled in disgust. *“Do you mean to tell me,”* he said, *“that He stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures of that floating ball?”* *“I do...strange as it may seem to us, He loves them. He went down to visit them to lift them up to become like Him.”*

*“Close your eyes for a moment,”* said the senior angel, *“and we will go back in what they call Time.”* *“Now, look!”* There appeared here and there on the dull surface of the globe little flashes of light, some momentary and some persisting for quite a time. *“Every flash and glow of light that you see is the Father’s wisdom breaking into the minds and hearts of people...”*

*“Why are they so blind and deaf?”* asked the junior angel rather crossly.

The Earth went on turning and circling round the sun, and then suddenly, in the upper half of the globe, there appeared a light, tiny but so bright in its intensity that both the angels hid their eyes. *“I think I can guess,”* said the little angel in a low voice. *“That was the Visit, wasn’t it?”* *“Yes, that was the Visit. The Light Himself went down there and lived among them; but in a moment...the light will go out.”*

*“But why? Could He not bear their darkness? Did He have to return here?”* *“No, it wasn’t that,”* replied the senior angel. His voice was stern and sad. *“They failed to recognize Him for Who He was - or at least only a handful knew Him. For the most part they preferred their darkness to His Light, and in the end, they killed Him.”*

*“Watch now but be ready to cover your eyes again.”* In utter blackness the earth turned around three times, and then there blazed with unbearable radiance a point of light. *“What now?”* asked the little angel, shielding his eyes. *“They killed Him*

*all right, but He conquered death...He rose again, and a few of them saw Him and from then on became His utterly devoted servants.”*

*“Thank God for that,” said the little angel. “Amen. Open your eyes now, the dazzling light has gone. The Prince has returned to His Home of Light. But watch the Earth now.”* As they looked, in place of the dazzling light there was a bright glow, which throbbed and pulsated. And then as the Earth turned, little points of light spread out. A few flickered and died; but for the most part the lights burned steadily, and as they continued to watch, in many parts of the globe there was a glow over many areas.

*“You see what is happening?”* asked the senior angel. *“The bright glow is the company of loyal men and women He left behind, and with His help they spread the glow all over the Earth.”* *“Yes, yes,”* said the little angel impatiently, *“but how does it end?”*

The senior messenger shook his head. *“We simply do not know,”* he replied. *“It is in the Father’s hands. Sometimes it is agony to watch and sometimes it is joy unspeakable. The end is not yet. But now I am sure you can see why this little ball is so important. He has visited it; He is working out His Plan upon it.”*

The apprentice concluded, *“I see, though I don’t understand. I shall never forget that this is the Visited Planet.”*

God is working out His plan this afternoon, right here and right now.

*Because of grace, Jesus was born to die in **your** place.* Baby Jesus is the same as Cross Jesus.

1. Jesus came to take your pain
2. Jesus came to take your punishment
3. Jesus came to take your place

Are you ready to repent, to believe and to receive the free gift of forgiveness and eternal life?

I’m going to lead in prayer and if what I pray represents what you believe, would you pray along with me silently? When I’m finished, I’m going to ask you to raise your hand if you prayed this prayer and meant it. Could you also take out the card that says, “Next Steps” and hold it while we pray?

*“Jesus, thank you for being born in Bethlehem. I marvel at how you fulfilled so many prophecies and that you died in my place to take my pain and my punishment. Thank you for fulfilling all the righteous demands of God’s Law by how you lived and for giving me the gift of your righteousness through your death and resurrection. I repent of my sins by turning from how I’ve been living. I believe you died in my place and I now receive you into my life. I want to be born again. Come into my life and make me the person you want me to be. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.”*

If you prayed that prayer and meant it, would you please raise your hand? Also, please take the “Next Steps” card and check the box, “I’ve decided to follow Jesus.” After we sing “Silent Night,” simply take this card to our Welcome Center in exchange for a bag filled with resources that will help you take your next step.

## **Silent Night**