

**ANCIENT WHISPERS**  
**NEW BEGINNINGS**  
**PASTOR GLENN BARTEAU**  
**ISAIAH 53:4-7**  
**12/23/07**

O Holy Night We look forward to it... and it's not for the presences, or trimmings... But we hang onto Xmas because it gives us great hope for another kind of life no matter what we face or what we've done.

This all starts in the O.T. Promises that God will send the Anointed One.  
Promises of hope; promises to heal broken hearts; promises to redeem us

Isaiah 53:4-5

This morning I want you to see this through the eyes of those 700 years before Christ...?

Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.  
↳ This prophesy comes to a defeated, war worn group of people.

Sommersby

w/ Richard Gere and Jodie Foster.... It picks up in the South right as the Civil War comes to an end. It's about a woman named Laurel. Her Husband had long left to fight in the war. She is left to work this plantation. But, the war has ravaged the plantation. The crops are all but destroyed, no supplies, very little live stock. With the end of the war the slaves are free but, they are trapped w/ everyone else in poverty and isolation.

Finally Jack, Laurel's husband returns but no one is really happy to see him at first... especially his wife. He was never a good husband, friend, or neighbor. They are all left to eek out this **hollow life in a war torn culture**.

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This is the type of culture Isaiah is writing in.

Map

Buy Isaiah's day Israel has been divided into two separate nations. **Northern Kingdom which retained the title of Israel**, and a **Southern Kingdom called Judah**.

Israel

Map

Things in Israel are bad and getting worse; To the North **Assyria** is growing stronger and more blood thirsty. They slowly begin brutalizing everyone close

6 Kings

Worse, they go through a string of 6 kings very quickly.... all of which were assassinated by the one before them... one guy only lasts a month.

(ILL)

His new business cards aren't even back for alpha graphics before the next guy has knocked him off.

**Rebellion**

One of the marks of this string of Kings is rebellion. *You know...* along with murder assassination, infidelity, and pirating copyrighted music.

Scripture describes them as following the sins of Jeroboam... Which essential means they prostituted their love and devotion for God to other gods.

↳ To not even treat God w/ the respect of the one who delivered them from Egypt.

- Point: They were willing to break God's heart to pursue their own lusts... They don't care if they hurt God.
- Hole But Rebellion never delivers long term happiness or hope.... Every move they make things just get worse... They start digging themselves into a hole...  
They keep trying to deal with the Assyrian mess their own way. They fight, they make deal... **they even ask for help from Egypt...**
- Q: Guess who they don't turn to???(God) **The hole just keeps getting deeper...**
- Joke Years ago I got some great advice: If you find yourself in a hole... Stop digging!  
~ This is Isaiah's message... you're in a hole... stop digging! And turn to God, but, Israel just keeps going back for a bigger shovel.
- (Story) Got a little bobcat stuck, got a bigger loader, got it stuck... passed my dad...  
"So, are you looking for me or just a bigger loader?"
- i.e It's the guy who loses too much money gambling... but rather than stop... He bets more money trying to make up his losses... but it just gets him in more trouble.
- i.e It's the teen takes the car out when she not allow... has a fender bender... then has to tell a lie to cover up, but then has to tell another lie to cover up the first lie to cover up taking the car out... Then she has to get her friends to lie for her to help cover it up...  
Isaiah says.... Stop digging and turn your life over to God... let him redeem and repair the mess you're in.

## Judah

Southern kingdom starts to dig their own hole as well... but their path is more about **neglect**. Where Israel was dominated by rebellion... neglect seems to be the theme of Judah at this point in time.

- They just neglect the spiritual life...

They have some good men as kings... They are not running head long into rebellion... but they won't provide spiritual leadership.

### 2 Kings 15:32b-35

"... Jotham son of Uzziah king of Judah began to reign. 33 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother's name was Jer'oo'sha daughter of Zadok. 34 He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done. 35 The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.

This describes them... It's not so much what they are doing as much as what they are not doing... They neglect the spiritual life...

Spiritual neglect is subtle but deadly.

Ahaz

Critical moment...

There is a very critical moment for Judah... Assyria is closing on Israel... **Israel joins forces with Aram to the East...** They want Judah to join them, but Ahaz king of Judah refuses... so Israel & Judah attack Israel in an effort to force them to help them.... Nice neighbors

**Edom to the South** sees what's happening and they figure Judah is an easy mark so they attack from the South.

**The Philistines in the West** see this, and say Judah is a really easy mark and suddenly Judah is under attack on all sides.

There has never been a moment in the young life of Ahaz that he needs God more than this... but he and Judah have drift so far from God they don't know how to get back to him.

~Isaiah is calling Ahaz and the people of Judah to trust God... trust God... **"Ahaz you're in a hole... stop digging!"** Think of God as a ladder...

Ahaz's choice

Ahaz has a choice – Will I trust God now, or will I keep digging... keep trying to do things my way? And under this unbelievable pressure... he does the unthinkable.

*Man this is sad*

2 Kings 16:3 tells us that rather than trust God Ahaz tries to solve this on his own. While being attacked on all sides he turns to pagan gods... and he kills his own son as a burnt offering to some pagan god.

- He needs God more than ever in his life... But years of spiritual neglect has brought him to the lowest point of his life.

Total Collapse

Eventually both Israel & Judah completely collapse and are over-thrown and killed or taken captive.

No Peace

There is no peace on earth for Israel or Judah.

No Joy

All they know is fear... and despair

No Hope

The Jews are on their way to fading into extinction as the Hittites, Cannites, Philistines, and Moabites did. They are all gone now The world maps of the 6<sup>th</sup> cent bc have been rewritten and they are not on them

Contemporary situation

**Rebellion and neglect...** we understand this We have all rebelled from God at different moments... We have all neglected a spiritual life....

We have all found ourselves in a hole... we all know what it is to live without peace, joy, hope, or community with God.

## Part 2

Here's the beauty of Christmas... the reason people will never give up on this season.

Governments, corporations... can be as PC as they want... we can say "Happy Holidays..." Replace Christmas trees with giant snow flakes, but Christmas will endure. Because it carries this enduring truth...

↳ God has made a way... **Isaiah is like the gospel of the O.T.** God will come to redeem and rescue us from our own rebellion and neglect.

*Friends*

God's going to rescue them... He's going to restore them... So in their darkest hour Isaiah starts giving these unbelievable promises... promises that God will restore Israel...

## Two Part Prophecy

That the Jews will have Jerusalem again... They will not perish. More than that God will redeem them spiritually to have a relationship w/ Him.

This is **simply unbelievable**... Babylon, Greece, and Egypt dominate the landscape of the know world as super powers that the world had not seen before. It's unthinkable that Israel will be restored to becoming her own nation.

And yet in the face overwhelming odds some of the Jews begin believing God will come for them. They hear the promises of Isaiah... and they start repeating them and singing them.

I don't have time to go through the history, but they rebuild the temple... they rebuild Jerusalem... But all this is not the end. This is just a picture of the deeper work of redemption God will do.

⇒ Just as God can restore Jerusalem... God can redeem the human heart... Which brings us to a specific prophesy Isaiah gives

Isaiah predicts Christ  
Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

He will not be the kind of rescuer they would normally think of.

- ✓ He will not have vast armies,
- ✓ He will not wheeled authority as a king or ruler of a nation....
- ✓ We will not see him slaying his enemies by the sword.
  - He will come as a lamb... a sacrificial lamb... The Jews understood this imagery... God had careful spent a thousand years weaving this picture of salvation into the fabric of their culture...

## Silent

What's more.... At some critical moment... the Messiah is going to come under attack and he will be presented with the opportunity to defend himself... to make an argument to save his own life... and he will be silent.

## Sommersby

In Sommersby when Jack shows up they discover that he's not the old Jack... This is some other man... And they love this man... He has brought hope. HE gives land to former slaves... He pulls the community together from the ravages of war... It's this amazing story of redemption.

But their comes a crisis... the old Jack.... The mean, selfish, abusive Jack murdered someone while he was gone, and now the authorities have come looking for Jack Sommersby.

**The new Jack is arrested for the sins of the old Jack.**

It goes to trial... Laurel pleads with him to defend himself... You've got to explain you're a different man... you didn't murder anyone...

In a very pointed moment he says: If I defend myself the land be lost, former slaves will go back to a life of poverty and disrepair?

He takes the stand, and they ask the questions, and he makes no defense for himself... he sits silently and bares the conviction and punishment of the old Jack. The next day he is hung death at the gallows.

## Jesus

This is the story of Jesus... You and me... we are the old Jack... we are the one's who dug the hole... we are the ones who need rescue from a hollow life.

Matt 27:12-14

12When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer.  
13Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" 14But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor

What you have to know is that for the entire ministry of Christ he has verbally spared with the best scribes, lawyers, and Reli leaders... They did everything in their power to trap him... out argue him and they couldn't. He simply proved to be the wisest smartest teacher who's ever lived.

Now Pilate is a little confused. Things don't add up to him. Jesus seems innocent to him.

Q:

Who thinks Jesus couldn't make an argument to get out of this? This would have been a cake walk!!!

He walked into that room w/ Pilate and his purpose was never to avoid death or pain. The thing on his mind was not how do I talk my way through this... The thing on his mind was you!

↳ His purpose was to redeem you me and anyone who would trust him.

## Invitation