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God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

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God's Plan to Restore Paradise

A New Look at Isaiah 53

By Dr. Gary Hedrick

When people say, "A good God wouldn't create an ominous and (at times) cruel world like this one," they are absolutely right. He wouldn't—and He didn't.

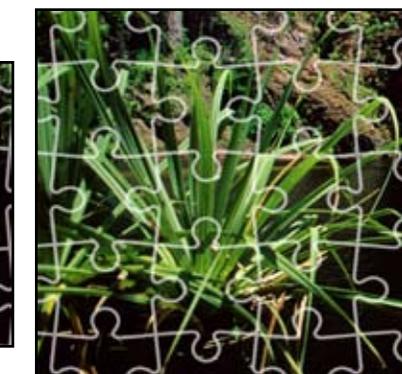
The world He created was originally perfect. Sickness, pain, disease, poverty, injustice, warfare, and death were unknown to the man and woman who lived in that paradise ages ago. These anomalies were not part of the original design. They entered the world as a result of sin; and as we will see here in Isaiah's prophecy, these imperfections are temporary conditions. God has made arrangements for paradise to be restored someday.

It is not my intention to minimize the importance of the Fourth Servant Song (Isa. 52:13—53:12) as being a prophetic portrait of Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth as our Messiah, Savior, and Redeemer. It is certainly that, and we cannot immerse ourselves in this powerful passage without suddenly realizing that we are breathing the atmosphere of Calvary. Through the telescopic lens of prophecy, however, this passage allows

us to look beyond Calvary. We can see to a future time when the Holy One of Israel will begin the process of setting aright all that went wrong in the aftermath of Adam's rebellion in the Garden of Eden.

Isaiah's emphasis on the restoration of paradise on earth is unmistakable. The future Messianic Age is like a golden thread that weaves its way through the fabric of this book from beginning to end. The Prophet Isaiah talks about a future transformation of agriculture (32:15), the animal kingdom (11:6-7), juris-

prudence (2:4a), international relations (2:4b), medicine (33:24), and global governance (9:6-7, 32:1-2). Israel, for the first time in 3,000 years, will dwell securely in her Land (32:18)—and the Jewish people will follow a Torah written on their hearts and in their minds rather than one etched in stone (according to Jeremiah 31:31-33).



Again, in Isaiah's prophecy, we find that at long last the nations of the Middle East will live together in peace and friendship (19:24-25). The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord like the waters cover the sea (11:9). It is hard for us to imagine a utopian world like this because we have no basis for it—except, perhaps, in fanciful stories we heard in childhood. Yet, this perfection is precisely the reality that Isaiah envisions—and it is no fairy tale!

This idea has carried over into modern Judaism in its Hebrew prayers for *tikkun olam*, or “repairing (perfecting) the world.” It’s a recognition that we live in a broken (Christians would say “fallen”) world that needs to be fixed. Other cultures and religions echo similar themes. It’s as though we instinctively know that there’s something terribly wrong with this world. It’s badly in need of repair. And someday, according to the Bible, it will be restored.

How is such a restoration possible? After all, the prophesied transformation is not just a superficial remodeling job. The changes in nature will be profound. For instance, the lion—which has adapted over millennia into a very efficient hunting, killing, and meat-eating machine—will become herbivorous and live in peace with animals that used to be its prey (see Isaiah 11:6-7). The fact that the lion will adopt a cellulose-based diet suggests a complete alteration in its digestive physiology. Equally dramatic changes will occur in other sectors of the animal kingdom. It is truly mind-boggling!

throughout all five stanzas, each one appears to have its own emphasis.

Stanza One: The Paradox (52:13-15)

*Behold, My Servant shall
deal prudently;*

*He shall be exalted and
extolled and be very high.*

Just as many were astonished at you,

*So His visage was marred more than
any man,*

*And His form more than
the sons of men;*

So shall He sprinkle many nations.

Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;

*For what had not been
told them they shall see,*

*And what they had not heard they
shall consider.*

Servant himself was born in a cave, surrounded by farm animals, because His little family was in transit and there was no room for them in the local inns. His first bed was a feeding trough. His birth was announced not to the rich and famous, but to simple shepherds who were working in the fields that night (see Luke 2:8-14).

And there is another, deeper level to this paradox: Isaiah says that this Servant will be both abased and exalted.

Humiliation (v. 14)

Before He embarks on His kingly mission, the Servant must first suffer pain, shame, mockery—and even death. This is what the first-century rabbis didn’t understand. They wanted the Messiah to come so He could rule and reign. They weren’t interested in a Messiah who first had to suffer and die. Yet, the Prophet clearly says (quoting the Lord) that the Servant would suffer great distress, abuse, and even disfigurement.

*So His visage was marred
more than any man.*

So who is powerful enough to reshape and remake the world down to its very foundations? And what evidence do we have that this is actually going to happen? Is it just an idealized pipe dream that’s rooted more in wishful thinking than it is in reality? These are some of the questions that the Prophet answers in this amazing passage. The Fourth Servant Song is organized into five stanzas of three verses each. The Lord himself is speaking in the opening and closing sections; and in the middle section, the speaker is collective Israel, who has had a change of heart about this Servant whom God has sent. While certain themes are interwoven

This first stanza begins with the words of the Lord himself, “*Behold, My Servant . . .*” (52:13), focusing our attention at the very outset on the central figure of the prophecy. Who would have thought to send a humble servant to change the world? Wouldn’t it make more sense to send a powerful potentate, or someone with worldly influence and means? Although it defies human logic, this is exactly what God did: He sent a servant.

Even though He possessed a royal genealogy, this Servant came from a humble background. His earthly, adoptive father was a working man—a carpenter. The

You see, the Lord had to deal with our inner problem (sin) before He could initiate His program to restore paradise here on earth. After all, our outward behavior—whether good or bad—is nothing more than a reflection of what we are within. People commit heinous crimes because something has gone wrong inside them.

Not long ago, a young man went on a shooting rampage on a university campus and murdered several innocent, unarmed students before turning the gun on himself. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident. Similar massacres have taken place on numerous high

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And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.

school and college campuses in recent years. This is the new way of committing suicide—first you commit a mass murder, and then you kill yourself. It is tragic beyond words. The perpetrators of these crimes are angry, broken people.

The truth is, we all have a dark side—whether or not we want to admit it (see Romans 3:23). Under certain circumstances, we may be capable of acts that would surprise us. So it does little good to clean up the world outwardly (or cosmetically) if no one bothers to repair the fundamental brokenness that is inside of us.

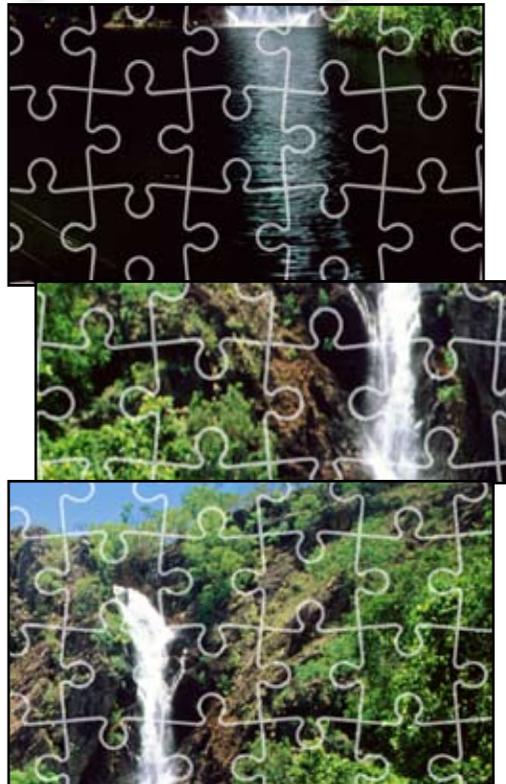
And this is why God sent His Son into the world as a baby born in Bethlehem. The Lord was flying under the “rabbinic radar,” one might say, in order to establish a beachhead for His covert mission. He lived for approximately 33 years, and then, to everyone’s surprise, He died at the hands of Roman executioners—something His disciples weren’t expecting. And it certainly wasn’t what Israel wanted from her Messiah. But something had to be done about our spiritual brokenness.

The Lord knew we needed to be saved spiritually before the world itself could be repaired physically. His death paid the price for our redemption and made real change in the human heart possible. And His subsequent resurrection confirmed that He was approved by God and that His precious blood had been accepted as the payment for our sins (see Acts 2:22-24).

The Messiah ascended to Heaven, and someday He will return in power and glory to repair our broken world (see Acts 1:6-11). The same Servant who was humiliated in His first coming will be exalted in His second coming. And this leads us to our next point.

Exaltation (vv. 13, 15)

Isaiah says that this suffering Servant “. . . will prosper, He will be high and



lifted up and greatly exalted” (v. 13). Having been exalted, the Servant will then be in a position to carry out His mission of transforming the world.

That the rulers of nations are said to respond to Him in astonishment (v. 15) strongly implies the Servant’s intervention in world affairs. If He wasn’t doing something on an international scale, there would be no reason for world rulers to take note of Him. And their silence (“. . . kings will shut their mouths, . . .” v. 15) demonstrates the Servant’s preeminence over them.

In the ancient world, one could be executed on the spot for speaking out of turn in the presence of a king. But here is a servant in whose presence kings are afraid to speak.

With the benefit of New Testament revelation, Christians understand that the Messiah’s preeminence will be firmly established at the end of the Tribulation when He quickly (and almost effortlessly) destroys the multinational military

force arrayed against Jerusalem at the close of the Armageddon Campaign (see Revelation 16:16, 19:11-19). This is why the kings of the earth will have nothing to say. Isaiah quotes the Lord as saying, “. . . they will understand” (v. 15c).

We can take the Servant’s exaltation a step further. One commentator proposes this rhetorical question: “[The words] ‘high and lifted up’ . . . are used in combination four times in this book (and no place else in the OT). In the other three places (6:1, 33:10, 57:15) they describe God. Whom do they describe here?”¹ The implication is that the Servant is, in some sense, God himself.

Stanza Two: The Penitent (53:1-3)

Who has believed our report?

*And to whom has the arm
of the LORD been revealed?*

*For He shall grow up before
Him as a tender plant,*

And as a root out of dry ground.

He has no form or comeliness;

And when we see Him,

*There is no beauty that
we should desire Him.*

*He is despised and
rejected by men,*

*A Man of sorrows and
acquainted with grief.*

*And we hid, as it were,
our faces from Him;*

*He was despised, and we
did not esteem Him.*

In the first stanza, we were listening to God as He spoke about His servant. Now there is a change of voice, because the pronouns used are “we” and “our” instead of “my.” In the beginning of this section, the speaker is the nation Israel. And from what Israel has to say about the Servant, it’s evident that she is no longer skeptical. Israel realizes her mistake, and has finally recognized her

Messiah. In fact, she can't believe that she couldn't see this truth before!

This portrayal of a repentant and regenerated Israel is significant because Israel's acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah is a key to *tikkun olam*, the repairing of our broken and suffering world. The Lord has already begun the process of transforming the world by sending His Son to die on Calvary to meet the requirements of His holiness and justice, thereby fixing the problem of the human heart (potentially, that is, for those who trust in Him). The next phase is to establish God's Kingdom on earth (see Matthew 6:10), so the practical, down-to-earth (literally) repair work can begin. World governance, business,

The Root (v. 2)

Here, believing Israel explains the nature of her error. She didn't recognize the Messiah when He came the first time, because she was looking for the wrong things. The rabbis wanted a powerful, charismatic, militaristic Messiah who could lead Israel to victory over her oppressors. But as we have already seen, God sent a lowly, humble servant, "a root out of dry ground." He didn't attract their attention (at least not positively), because He didn't fit their preconceived messianic profile. His resumé didn't match their job description.

The "root" speaks of the Messiah's humanity. He sprang from the line

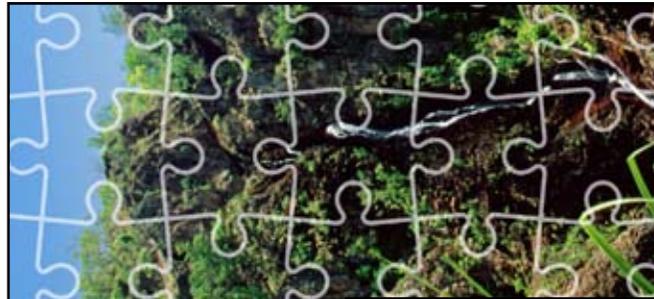
in the same sentence sounds like a contradiction in terms, yet it was a reality in the Incarnation. Israel now understands the seriousness of her failure to recognize Him.

The Jewish Study Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) connects the phrase "hid . . . our faces" to the scourge of leprosy (footnote, p. 891). Lepers had to cover their heads (see Leviticus 13:45ff). Again, this wasn't what Israel was looking for in her Messiah. So she rejected Him.

Have you ever suffered rejection? Maybe you applied for admission to a particular school but were rejected. Or you may have submitted a manuscript

And by His stripes we are healed.

agriculture, education, media, philosophy, and everything else will be transformed. But none of it will happen until the Lord returns—and that won't happen until His people Israel recognize Him as Savior and Messiah: "For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Matt. 23:39).



The Report (v. 1)

Collectively, the nation cries out and says, "Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" (v. 1). The report was the statement in 52:13-15 that the Servant would suffer the most grotesque abuse and ignominy before being exalted over the kings of the earth.

One commentator observes, "They are repentant sinners, who finally see the light. The phrase 'our report' can mean 'the report which we proclaim,' or 'the report which was proclaimed to us.' The latter fits better here, where the report is most naturally taken as the announcement that has just been made [in 52:13-15]. A better translation would be, 'Who would have believed what we just heard?'"²



of David (see Isaiah 11:1, 10), like a tender sapling sprouts from the underground root of a tree.



The Rejection (v. 3)

Israel's lament continues. The Servant was despised and forsaken, and they hid their faces from Him. The eternal God, for the first time, became familiar with infirmity. Speaking "God" and "infirmity"

to a publisher only to receive a rejection slip. Maybe you asked a girl to marry you and she turned you down. Rejection can be devastating. The Lord's rejection by His people was even more devastating because of His great love for them (see Matthew 23:37). Now the nation understands what she did—and she is sorry. "We did not esteem Him" is a very solemn self-rebuke.

Stanza Three: The Punishment (53:4-6)

*Surely He has borne our
griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for
our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our
peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes 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.*

This Scripture expresses the punitive aspect of the Messiah's work. God's holy nature demands that sin be dealt with and appropriately punished.

The Servant's punishment anticipates a future paradise (v. 4).

The Hebrew word translated "griefs" (*choliy*) in the above passage is translated either "sickness" or "disease" in 19 other occurrences in the Bible. Sickness and disease, of course, resulted from the Adamic Curse (see Genesis 2:16-17, cp. 3:17-19). Here, Isaiah says that the Servant bore our sicknesses and carried our sorrows. So is healing in the atonement? Yes, it is—eventually—when the time comes for the great restoration of the world. That's why the healing ministry of Jesus was seen as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53 (see Matthew 8:16-17). The redemption wrought by the Messiah includes not only our souls, but also our mortal bodies (which will someday be resurrected and glorified; see 1 Corinthians 15:50-55) and the entire creation (which will someday be transformed, as cited in Romans 8:19-22).

Someday, then, the curse will be lifted and Eden-like conditions will be restored. This is all made possible by Messiah's atoning work on Calvary 2,000 years ago.

The Servant's punishment was vicarious (vv. 5-6).

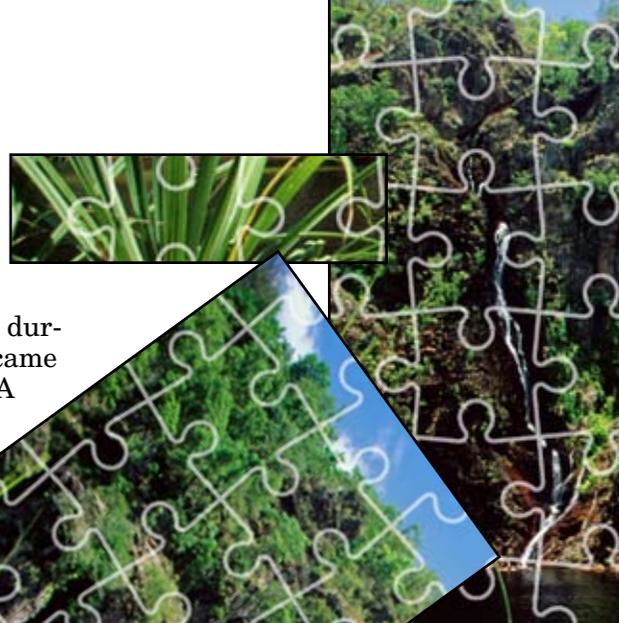
The pronoun "our" is critical in this stanza. The Lord took upon Himself the punishment for our sins ("our griefs," "our sorrows," "our transgressions," and "our iniquities"). Not *His* (because He had none), but *ours*. The speaker here is repentant Israel, but the redeemed

of all ages could echo their cry. The Servant was innocent, and we were guilty. He suffered in our place.

Years ago, I heard a story that supposedly occurred in Chinatown during the late 1800s. A young man became intoxicated at a late-night party. A scuffle broke out, and he accidentally killed a man with his knife. Dazed and confused, he stumbled home and told his older brother what he had done. The police started a house-to-house search of the neighborhood. As the sound of their whistles grew louder, the older brother quickly took the blood-soaked clothes of the younger brother and put them on himself. Then he took the knife in his own hands and made sure that his fingerprints were all over it. The police took him away, and within a matter of weeks he was convicted of the crime and executed.

Afterward, the younger brother was consumed with grief and guilt over having allowed his brother to die for his crime. Finally, when he could stand it no longer, he went to the authorities and confessed. He explained what he had done and begged the court to execute him and put him out of his misery. But the judge explained that they couldn't touch him because his brother had already paid the penalty for his crime. As far as the State of California was concerned, the debt had been paid.

Now I don't know if this incident ever actually happened, or if such a scenario would even be possible under the principles of modern jurisprudence. But this simple story effectively illustrates the principle of substitutionary atonement. The Lord Jesus died for our sins. Our punishment was placed upon Him. Therefore, our sin-debt has been paid in



full—and no one can call us into account for it!

Horatio Spafford celebrated this wonderful assurance in the lyrics of one of the world's most beloved hymns, "It Is Well with My Soul":

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross,
and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
O my soul!

In Verse 6, redeemed Israel compares herself to a flock of sheep ("*All we like sheep . . .*"). This self-characterization is interesting because sheep are quiet, docile creatures. They are no one's natural enemy. The term "predatory sheep" is an oxymoron, because there is no such thing. You never hear about packs of wild sheep wandering around the countryside, randomly attacking farm animals. Because they are prone to wander and are unable to protect themselves, sheep become prey for wolves, coyotes, and other wild animals. That's why the shepherd has to keep them under his watchful eye.

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, . . . He had done no violence.

Get it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.

Stanza Four: The Payment (53:7-9)

*He was oppressed and
He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its
shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
He was taken from prison
and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the
land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people
He was stricken.
And they made His grave
with the wicked—
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was any deceit in His mouth.*

This stanza is the compensatory aspect of the Atonement. Sinners are spiritually bankrupt, so they bring nothing to

the table; yet a price has to be paid in order for redemption to take place. It's a concept that's rooted in the ancient practice of redeeming (or freeing) a slave by paying a price (or ransom). The Bible says that we were not redeemed by the payment of a monetary price (as in the case of ancient slaves), but with the precious blood of the Messiah (see 1 Peter 1:18-19). The Lord did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

In this fourth stanza, repentant Israel acknowledges in several ways that the ransom price was paid. The prophetic portrayal of Calvary is unmistakable.

He was oppressed . . . (and) afflicted . . . as a lamb (v. 7).

Here, the "sheep" motif is continued from the previous verse. The people of Israel are themselves like sheep, so they now understand that the Lord Jesus, too, was like an innocent lamb being led to the slaughter. He was oppressed and afflicted by His enemies—but like a lamb, He never raised His voice in protest. The NT tells us that, indeed, He was the Lamb of God who (in His death) would take away the sin of the world (see John 1:29, 36).

He was taken away . . . (and) cut off (v. 8).

The New Bible Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1962) says, "C.R. North translates v. 8a: 'After arrest and sentence he was led away'; the whole stanza irresistibly evokes the trial of Jesus and its sequel" (p. 618).

According to commentator J. Alec Motyer³, the Hebrew term for "cut off" (*gazar*) ". . . is a verb with an almost unbroken record of violence" (p. 434). For instance, it's used to describe the cutting of a human body in half (see 1 Kings 3:25) and the chopping down of a tree (see 2 Kings 6:4). Repentant Israel, then, is recognizing the violent nature of the Servant's death.

He was with a rich man in death (v. 9).

This application is something even the liberal commentators have difficulty explaining. The Servant is associated somehow with a rich man in His death. The Lord Jesus was buried in the tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea (see Matthew 27:57-60). Except perhaps to the most obtuse of readers, the messianic connection in this passage is unmistakable.

The Messiah's Infinite Sacrificial Payment

Sometimes people want to know how Jesus the Messiah could die for the sins of all of humanity—past, present, and future. After all, He was just one man, wasn't He?

The answer to this question is found in His identity as the unique and eternal Son of God. He existed long before He was born in Bethlehem. That Middle Eastern manger was merely the portal through which He entered this world and took upon Himself a human body (see Philippians 2:7-8). He had reigned in Heaven as the Second Person of the Godhead throughout all of eternity past (see John 8:58).

As an eternal, uncreated being, the Lord Jesus was capable of an infinite sacrificial death. And when Jesus was resurrected, He eternally returned to His role in the Godhead. But His infinite death is precisely what had to happen because the consequence of sin is eternal death (see Genesis 2:17). How could any of us overcome such an infinite

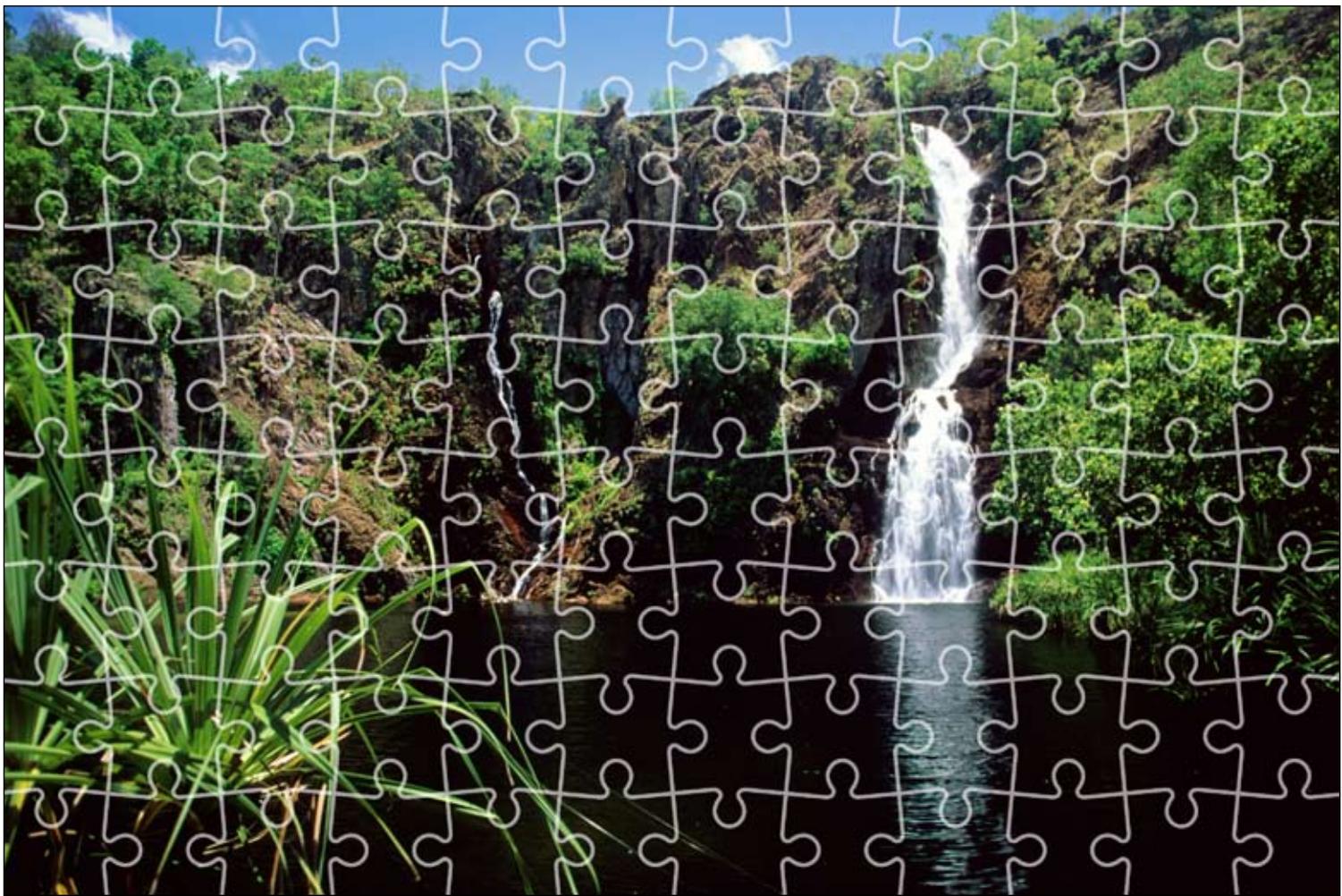
deficit? Since we're finite beings, it would take us an eternity to do it. That's why God sent His eternal Son to do it for us. Expressed as an equation, it looks something like this (∞ is the symbol for infinity):

$$\text{Jesus an } \infty \text{ being} \times \text{finite death} = \infty \text{ payment for our sin}$$

The Messiah could die one time, then, and it was in effect an eternal death. His death fully and completely satisfied the requirements of God's holiness and justice, and paid our everlasting debt in full.

This also explains why, tragically, people who reject God's free gift of salvation will spend eternity suffering the consequences of that rejection:

$$\text{Finite being} \times \infty \text{ death} = \infty \text{ payment}$$



And again, because of the vast scope of redemption, this whole stanza points us not only to the redeeming of God's people (by the payment of a price), but also to the eventual redemption of all Creation.

**Stanza Five:
The Promise (53:10-12)**

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;

He has put Him to grief.

*When You make His soul
an offering for sin,*

*He shall see His seed, He shall
prolong His days,*

*And the pleasure of the LORD
shall prosper in His hand.*

*He shall see the labor of His soul,
and be satisfied.*

*By His knowledge My righteous
Servant shall justify many,*

For He shall bear their iniquities.

*Therefore I will divide Him
a portion with the great,*

*And He shall divide the spoil
with the strong,*

*Because He poured out
His soul unto death,*

*And He was numbered
with the transgressors,*

And He bore the sin of many,

*And made intercession
for the transgressors.*

How can we be certain that a future, physical restoration is coming for this world? It's a certainty because of the physical restoration's connection with the promise of spiritual redemption found in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song. Our future, physical redemption—and that of the entire world—is just as certain as the past, spiritual redemption. God will fulfill the promises associated with His second coming just as surely as He fulfilled the promises associated with His first coming!

If you have any doubts about this truth, just look at your calendar. The history of the world is divided into "BC" and "AD," calculated from the birth of that baby in Bethlehem. Every time you

write the date, you are affirming that God Almighty intervened in history in a most remarkable way some 2,000 years ago. He fulfilled the prophecies of His Son's first coming. The Messiah's second coming—and everything He has promised to do when that time comes—is just as sure and certain as was His first coming.

This final stanza highlights a series of divine "I/He wills."

**He will see His offspring ("seed")
... (and) prolong His days (v. 10).**

How can the Servant see His offspring and prolong His days if He's dead? The only way this can happen is if He doesn't remain dead. Death, by its very nature, is characterized by finality and irreversibility. When a person dies, he's just that—dead, end of story. But what Isaiah is describing here isn't an ending. It's a beginning, a new start. The Servant who's pictured here suffers horribly—beyond words—and ultimately dies (vv. 8-9). But then He is exalted, and even kings bow before Him; therefore, a resurrection of the Servant is in view here.

Sometimes people want to know if the term "offspring" means that Jesus got married and had children, as fictional works like *The Da Vinci Code* have

claimed. But the Prophet isn't talking about physical offspring. Remember, God himself has many sons and daughters—more than we could ever count, in fact. All of us who have trusted in Jesus the Messiah are indeed His spiritual offspring (1 John 3:2).

The pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand (v. 10).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986) says, “[The Servant] will be blessed (‘prosper’; cf. Isa. 53:12a) because of His obedience to the will (plan) of the LORD” (p. 1109).

He will . . . be satisfied (v. 11a).

When He had completed His work of paying for the sins of the world, the Lord

and now. On the contrary, Jesus the Messiah is the only real hope this world has for a meaningful, peaceful, and secure future. All of mankind's efforts up to now have failed miserably.

The story is told about a grandfather who found a world map in a newspaper and thought it would be an ideal teaching tool in his effort to teach his young grandson about geography. So he took some scissors and cut the map up into about two dozen pieces. He gave the pieces to the boy and said, “Johnny, I’ll buy you that new baseball glove you want so badly if you can put this world map together in less than an hour.”

The grandfather was astonished when Johnny returned about ten minutes later and had the whole map taped together

creation itself” will also be liberated and transformed.

Peter mentioned this coming restoration in one of his sermons (as recorded by Dr. Luke in Acts 3:19-21):

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

“and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

*“whom heaven must receive **until the times of restoration of all things**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began”* (emphasis mine).

And He bore the sin of many.

Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” (see John 19:30). He was satisfied that this portion of His mission (i.e., the payment of the price for our ransom/redemption) had been accomplished.

He will justify the many . . . (and) bear their iniquities (11b).

Again, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says, “He bore the punishment (cf. vv. 4, 6) for their iniquities (cf. v. 6), so that many people would not have to die. Because He died, they live” (p. 1109).

I will allot Him a portion with the great . . . He will divide the booty with the strong (v. 12).

At the close of this Servant Song, the voice is God's. He will place His humble Servant among the great ones and the Servant will divide the booty of His victory with the strong. The imagery here is that of a great conqueror returning from battle and carrying with him the spoils of war (e.g., Psalm 68:18).

Christianity isn't merely a pie-in-the-sky religion with no application in the here

perfectly. He couldn't believe it! He laughed and said, “Johnny, this is just amazing! How did you do it so quickly?”

“Well, Grandpa, it was easy,” the boy explained. “I figured out that there was a picture of a man on the back of the same page. So when I put the man together and turned the page over, the world was perfect.”

This is what Isaiah is telling us in his remarkable song. Redemption isn't just about spiritual salvation, as important as that is. Redemption is also about the eventual transformation of the entire Creation. Put man back together and everything else ultimately falls into place.

The Apostle Paul, in the New Testament, describes “the whole creation” as groaning in pain like a woman in labor because of the curse that came upon her after Adam's sin (see Romans 8:22; cp. Genesis 3:16-19). He says that's why “the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (v. 20)—because that's when (according to Verse 21) “the

When the Lord Jesus returns in glory, He won't come as a silent, submissive, suffering Servant, but rather as the regal, roaring, reigning Lion of the Tribe of Judah (see Revelation 5:5)! And when He comes, there will be work to do—namely, the “restoration of all things.”

Now that's good news, my friend! Our Messiah-King is coming, and big changes are ahead for this battle-weary, scarred world. And the key to it all—at least from an earthly standpoint—is the salvation of Israel. As we noted earlier, the Messiah won't return until His earthly people are ready to acknowledge and receive Him by crying out, “*Baruch haba baShem Adonai* (‘. . . Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’)” (Matt. 23:39).

Dr. Gary Hedrick is President of CJF Ministries.



¹*New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Book of Isaiah, Vol. III [Chapters XL-LXVI]* by Edward J. Young [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1972], p. 378.

²*Handbook on the Prophets* by Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002], p. 119.

³*The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993].

Need More Info?

If you have questions or concerns about your eternal destiny, or about Jesus of Nazareth and the difference He can make in your life, we invite you to contact us.

There are people here who are ready, willing, and able to help and encourage you as you consider these all-important issues.

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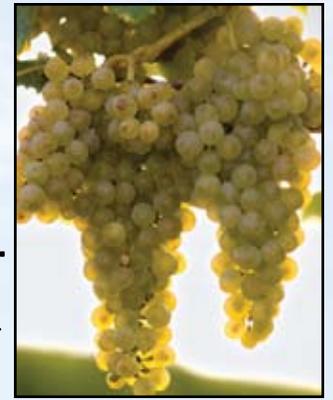


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By Violette Berger

Fruit from the Harvest



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A Road Trip to Heaven

CJFM Missionary Brian Zuckerman (Las Vegas) had the privilege of speaking at a monthly gathering of evangelical churches in Needles, a small town in California. Brian writes, “It is something that is very rare these days. Once a month, the churches all get together for fellowship and worship.”

Brian considered it an honor to speak at this important event—and shared his testimony, of which the most important part is the presentation of the Gospel message. As he usually does at the end of his messages, Brian shared the Good News once again before giving an altar call.

That night, **two** women prayed with him to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Following the service, Brian spoke with one of the women and her husband who shared the following story: “They told me that they did not live in Needles, but were passing through when they had a flat tire. They came into the church to ask for help, and decided to stay for the service. Her husband is a believer and had been praying for his wife for a long time.”

Eleven to Heaven

Barry Berger, CJFM Director of Missions Emeritus (Phoenix), recently presided over the funeral service of a dear friend, Tim, in Phoenix. Barry and I have been friends with Tim and Jane during the past 15 years, and we are also close friends with their son, Jim, and his wife, Lily.

Whenever we got together with Tim and Jane, they told us such interesting stories about their lives in the Southwest—as they had been instrumental in the development of the Phoenix area. They would often request that Barry preside over their funerals whenever the Lord called them home. Of course, Barry always said, “Yes.”

The time came when Jim called to inform Barry that his dad, Tim, had peacefully “passed away” that morning. The week before, Tim and Jane had just celebrated their sixty-ninth wedding anniversary. During the funeral service,

Barry pointed to the casket and said, “Tim is not in that box! His earth suit is, but Tim is now in the arms of our loving Father in Heaven.”

As Barry continued sharing the Gospel message, he said, “I knew that the Spirit of God was working in every heart that morning.” When he gave an invitation at the end of the service, **11** souls responded by praying with Barry to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Barry describes it as “a truly glorious moment.” Praise the Lord for His goodness!

“A Family Thing”

Before leaving on a speaking tour, **CJFM Missionary Richard Toviah (Phoenix)** shared a “Christ in the Passover” presentation at a small congregation in Arizona. When he gave an invitation at the end of the service, **six** souls came to faith. Upon talking with them afterward, Richard learned that they were all members of one Hispanic family who had been invited and attended the church for the first time that morning!

Wrestling with God

Richard also writes about another experience he had when sharing a “Christ in the Passover” presentation. He was receiving negative vibes from a middle-aged gentleman, who had his arms crossed and a look of utter displeasure on his face.

Much to Richard’s surprise, however, when he gave an invitation, this man—and two other individuals—made a profession of faith. (Richard later learned from a congregant that the man who looked so angry during the service “. . . had anti-Semitic feelings toward Jewish people.”) But Richard adds, “Somehow, somewhere during the presentation, the Lord touched this man, making him wrestle with his heart and mind until he took that step of faith.” Hallelujah! “. . . *With God all things are possible*” (Matt. 19:26).

Bible Questions AND Answers

By DR. GARY HEDRICK



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QUESTION: *Do you agree that the recent cutting of undersea Internet cables was probably part of a covert conspiracy to bring down our worldwide communications network? Doesn't it say in the Bible that "all communication will cease" in the end times? If so, could this be yet another prophetic sign of the times?*

ANSWER: The answer to all three of your questions is "No." I don't know where you read about this, but we did a quick Internet search and found the report to which you are most likely referring.

Several oceanic communications cables in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf were cut earlier this year, including one that linked Qatar with the United Arab Emirates. Privately owned cables like this lie on the ocean floor and handle roughly 95 percent of the world's telephone and data traffic, including the Internet. The industry likes these cables because they're faster and cheaper to use than satellites.

When these four or five cables ruptured, communications traffic was rerouted, and most of the world (except in the countries that were directly affected) never noticed the disruption. It is uncertain how the cables were damaged.

Anti-Israel factions were quick to pick up on these reports, and attributed the ruptured cables to a "Zionist conspiracy." They claimed that the Israelis and/or the US (depending on the theory) cut the cables in order to black out communications in Iran and the Arab world.

However, early reports that claimed Iran and other countries in the region were completely without communications ultimately proved to be either greatly exaggerated or (in some instances) totally false.

Does the Bible prophesy that "all communications will cease" someday? I know of no such statement in Scripture. On the contrary, the Bible indicates that in the end times, there will be an exponential increase in travel, and in the exchange of knowledge and information (e.g., Dan. 12:4). This, of course, is just the opposite of what you're suggesting.

“. . . the Bible indicates that in the end times, there will be an exponential increase in travel, and in the exchange of knowledge and information

. . . legitimate signs of the times are all around us—so there's no need to come up with imaginary ones.”

Some folks, particularly in our premillennial camp, have an unfortunate proclivity for manufacturing prophetic signs. They try to match anything and everything they see on the evening news with Bible prophecy. I understand their enthusiasm, and I share their passion for the prophetic Word; however, more often than not, the connection they try to make with current events is a stretch—if not an outright fabrication. This is regrettable, because legitimate signs of the times are all around us—so there's no need to come up with imaginary ones.

For instance, the biblical prophets made it very clear that world history is headed for an abrupt conclusion when the Messiah intervenes in world affairs and establishes Himself as the head of a global government with its capital in Jerusalem. This is not millenarian fiction, as some critics claim, but a simple statement of fact.

If we accept the credibility of prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, not to mention the New Testament prophecies, it's difficult to arrive at any other conclusion. Little wonder, then, that the Early Church was premillennial (it wasn't until later in church history that views like amillennialism were invented). The NT elaborates on this end-times theme and explains that we are headed for a globalized system where an "anti-messiah" (also known as "the beast") and a "false prophet" will rise to prominence in the Mediterranean region (the "sea") and exert political, economic, and religious control over the world (see Revelation 13:1-18, 16:13, 19:20).

The emerging global economy—which, by way of illustration, enables a traveler to go virtually anywhere in the world and use his Visa or MasterCard seamlessly—is just one manifestation of this still-evolving phenomenon of end-time "Babylon" (see Revelation 14:8, 16:19, 17:5, 18:1-21).

Keep looking up—the Lord is coming back! But while we're waiting, let's keep some integrity—and use simple, down-to-earth common sense—when it comes to the claims we make about prophetic signs.

MESSIANIC PERSPECTIVES RADIO SCHEDULE

Weekend Edition (EASTERN)

CSN 4:30 p.m. Sunday
Visit www.csnradio.com/stations.php for your local CSN station.

Radio Broadcasts heard Monday—Friday

ARIZONA

Apache Junction KXEG 1280 10:15 a.m.
Buckeye KXEG 1280 10:15 a.m.
Bullhead City KKVV 1060 10:00 a.m.
Goodyear KXEG 1280 10:15 a.m.
Phoenix KXEG 1280 10:15 a.m.
Scottsdale KXEG 1280 10:15 a.m.
Sun City West KXEG 1280 10:15 a.m.

ARKANSAS

Bella Vista KNEO-FM 91.7 10:30 a.m.
Bentonville KNEO-FM 91.7 10:30 a.m.
Forrest City KJIW-FM 94.5 6:00 p.m.
Helena KJIW-FM 94.5 6:00 p.m.
Marianna KJIW-FM 94.5 6:00 p.m.
West Memphis KJIW-FM 94.5 6:00 p.m.

CALIFORNIA

Bakersfield KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Bakersfield KRDU 1130 11:00 a.m.
Chico KCBC 770 8:00 p.m.
Delano KRDU 1130 11:00 a.m.
Fresno KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Fresno KRDU 1130 11:00 a.m.
Hanford KRDU 1130 11:00 a.m.
Los Angeles KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Madera KRDU 1130 11:00 a.m.
Merced KCBC 770 8:00 p.m.
Merced KRDU 1130 11:00 a.m.
Paso Robles KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Porterville KRDU 1130 11:00 a.m.
Sacramento KCBC 770 8:00 p.m.
Salinas KCBC 770 8:00 p.m.
San Francisco KCBC 770 8:00 p.m.
San Jose KCBC 770 8:00 p.m.
Santa Ana KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Santa Barbara KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Santa Clarita KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Santa Maria KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Santa Rosa KCBC 770 8:00 p.m.
Thousand Oaks KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Visalia KERI 1180 8:00 p.m.
Visalia KRDU 1130 11:00 a.m.

COLORADO

Boulder KRKS 990 10:30 a.m.
Colorado Springs KRKS 990 10:30 a.m.
Denver KRKS 990 10:30 a.m.
Ft. Collins KRKS 990 10:30 a.m.

DELAWARE

Middletown WVCH 740 10:45 a.m.
Wilmington WVCH 740 10:45 a.m.

FLORIDA

St. Petersburg WTIS 1110 1:00 p.m.
Sarasota WTIS 1110 1:00 p.m.
Tampa WTIS 1110 1:00 p.m.
Winter Haven WTIS 1110 1:00 p.m.

GEORGIA

Atlanta WGUN 1010 8:45 a.m.
Cordele WBML 900 3:00 p.m.
Griffin WBML 900 3:00 p.m.
Griffin WGUN 1010 8:45 a.m.
Macon WBML 900 3:00 p.m.
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INDIANA

Madison WIOK-FM107.5 11:15 a.m.
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Versailles WIOK-FM107.5 11:15 a.m.

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Cedar Rapids KPSZ 940 5:45 a.m.
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Oswego KNEO-FM 91.7 10:30 a.m.

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LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge WVOG 600 8:30 a.m.
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Las Vegas KKVV 1060 10:00 a.m.
Pahrump KKVV 1060 10:00 a.m.

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Browns Mills WCHR 920 6:30 a.m.
12:15 p.m. 9:45 p.m.
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12:15 p.m. 9:45 p.m.
Princeton WCHR 920 6:30 a.m.
12:15 p.m. 9:45 p.m.
Trenton WCHR 920 6:30 a.m.
12:15 p.m. 9:45 p.m.
Trenton WVCH 740 10:45 a.m.
Vineland WVCH 740 10:45 a.m.

NEW YORK

Albany WHAZ 1330 6:15 a.m.
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Rochester WDCX-FM 99.5 8:00 p.m.
Schenectady WMY-FM 97.3 6:15 a.m.
Troy WHAZ 1330 6:15 a.m.

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Hickory WCGC 1270 9:30 a.m.
Kannapolis WHVN 1240 9:30 a.m.
Lancaster WAVO 1150 9:30 a.m.
Monroe WHVN 1240 9:30 a.m.
Rock Hill WAVO 1150 9:30 a.m.
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Warminster WCHR 920 6:30 a.m.
12:15 p.m. 9:45 p.m.

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Jefferson City WITA 1490 10:45 a.m.
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Maryville WITA 1490 10:45 a.m.
Maynardville WITA 1490 10:45 a.m.
Memphis KJIW-FM 94.5 6:00 p.m.
Oak Ridge WITA 1490 10:45 a.m.

TEXAS

Austin KSLR 630 1:00 p.m.
Bay City KCTA 1030 10:30 a.m.
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Brownsville KCTA 1030 10:30 a.m.
Corpus Christi KCTA 1030 10:30 a.m.
Corsicana KKGK 1630 9:45 a.m.
Dallas KKGK 1630 9:45 a.m.
Denton KKGK 1630 9:45 a.m.
Fort Worth KKGK 1630 9:45 a.m.
Gonzales KSLR 630 1:00 p.m.
Harlingen KCTA 1030 10:30 a.m.
Kerrville KSLR 630 1:00 p.m.
Killeen KSLR 630 1:00 p.m.
Mineral Wells KKGK 1630 9:45 a.m.
Pearsall KSLR 630 1:00 p.m.
San Antonio KSLR 630 1:00 p.m.
Sherman KKGK 1630 9:45 a.m.
Victoria KCTA 1030 10:30 a.m.
Victoria KSLR 630 1:00 p.m.

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