

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to understand:

1. how they must interpret the prophetic books
2. **that the Old Testament must always be interpreted in the light of the New Testament**

I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

1. Prayer

Pray that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

2. Meditation

Worship is to submit to God's revelation.

Theme: God is the God of revelation.

You can get to know him

Read the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

➤ *The God of revelation*

Isaiah 46:1-13

¹ Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low;
their idols are borne by beasts of burden
(are but beasts and cattle)

The images that are carried about are burdensome,
a burden for the weary.

² They stoop and bow down together;
unable to rescue the burden,
they themselves go off into captivity.

³ "Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all you who remain of the house of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since you were conceived,
and have carried since your birth.

⁴ Even to your old age and gray hairs
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you;
I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

⁵ "To whom will you compare me or count me equal?
To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?

⁶ Some pour out gold from their bags
and weigh out silver on the scales;
they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god,
and they bow down and worship it.

⁷ They lift it to their shoulders and carry it;
they set it up in its place, and there it stands.

From that spot it cannot move.

Though one cries out to it, it does not answer;
it cannot save him from his troubles.

⁸ "Remember this, fix it in mind,
take it to heart, you rebels.

⁹ Remember the former things, those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me.

¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.

I say: My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please.

¹¹ From the east I summon a bird of prey;
from a far-off land, a man to fulfil my purpose
(Cyrus, 539 B.C.).

What I have said, that will I bring about;
what I have planned, that will I do.

¹² Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted,
you who are far from righteousness.

¹³ I am bringing my righteousness near,
it is not far away;

and my salvation will not be delayed.
I will grant salvation to Zion,
my splendour to Israel.

○ *God distinguishes himself in three very clear ways:*

- While the idols are being carried around by their followers (they cannot walk), the Living God carries his people.
- While the idols are being measured, weighed and made by humans, the Living God is the Creator of the universe and humans. He is completely incomparable.
- While the idols cannot speak or answer, the Living God speaks and makes known the end from the beginning and reveals what will happen in the future.

○ *Only God made true predictions*

God challenges the followers of the idols (the unbelieving Jews in Israel) to come with proofs that the idols or gods of the other religions have ever predicted anything. They have never predicted anything, never revealed what is still to come.

Only the God of the Bible has at the beginning in history announced the outcome of events in history. Only he has made the end known from the beginning. Only he has

predicted from ancient times what is still to come. Only the One True and Living God is the God of revelation.

➤ *The Mediator of revelation*

Matthew 11:25-27

²⁵At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. ²⁷"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

True knowledge about who this One True and Living God is, comes only through Jesus Christ and is given to those he wants to reveal it to. Besides Jesus Christ there is no Mediator between God and man! Without Jesus Christ no one can know God as Saviour. Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Jesus Christ speaks the final word of God (Hebrews 1:1-2). After Jesus Christ there is no more revelation from God!

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship God (in one or two sentences) as the God of revelation whom you can get to know.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: The prophetic books

Read or explain in your own words.

1. The Bible is not limited to the Old Testament and also does not exclude the Old Testament

While Jews limit the Holy Scriptures to the Old Testament, some Christians limit the Holy Scriptures to the New Testament. The Holy Scriptures consist of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

'God's people' (all believers in the Messiah Jesus Christ from all the nations) do not come into existence at the first coming of Christ, but at the creation!

2. The Bible consists only of the Old Testament and the New Testament and it has never been extended

➤ *The Old Testament revelation*

In the past (before the first coming of Christ) God spoke to his people through the prophets (of the Old Testament) at many times and in various ways. It was the Spirit of Jesus Christ who spoke through the Old Testament prophets (1 Peter 1:10-12)!

➤ *The New Testament revelation*

But in these last days (i.e. since the first coming of Christ) God has spoken his final word in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2; cf. John 16:13-15).

➤ *No additional revelation*

After the first coming of Christ no new additions can be made to God's revelation in the Bible (Revelation 22:18-19)! God speaks to us today through all the words recorded in the Bible (the 66 canonical books). Paul teaches: "Learn from us the meaning of the saying: 'Do not go beyond what is written' (in the Bible)!" (1 Corinthians 4:6).

3. The Old Testament and the New Testament together form one revelation

The Old Testament and the New Testament are one continuous revelation of God's plan that continuously becomes clearer. The relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament is like a 'shadow' to 'reality' or like 'prophecy' to 'fulfilment'.

4. The prophecies in the Old Testament should not simply be interpreted literally, but must be interpreted in the light of God's revelation in the New Testament

In the light of God's revelation in the New Testament, some prophecies in the Old Testament should be interpreted literally and other prophecies should be interpreted in a non-literal way! The New Testament revelation is decisive, because on the one hand it reveals the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies and on the other hand it teaches the meaning of the Old Testament revelation.

The prophetic books in the Bible are: Isaiah, Jeremiah, (Lamentations), Ezekiel, Daniel and the twelve Minor Prophets.

III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.

Theme: The prophetic books in the Bible

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Day 1 | 1 Peter 1:8-13
Christ is the Author of all prophecies in the Old Testament |
| Day 2 | Isaiah 1:10-20
The prophets proclaimed truths concerning God's will |
| Day 3 | Isaiah 40:11-31
The prophets proclaimed truths concerning who God is |
| Day 4 ^{BS} | Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12.
The prophets proclaimed the coming of the Messiah. |

- Day 5 Isaiah 55:1-13
The prophets proclaimed that the Messiah would call the nations¹
- Day 6 Jeremiah 23:1-6
The prophets preached against the false shepherds (leaders)
- Day 7 Jeremiah 23:16-32
The prophets preached against the false prophets
- Day 8 Ezekiel 18:1-32
The prophets called people to repentance
- Day 9 Ezekiel 33:1-11
The prophets warned the people as God's watchmen
- Day 10 Ezekiel 36:22-28
The prophets prophesied what would happen in the New Testament

IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.
If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: The prophetic books

- When does God reconsider his promises (Jeremiah 18:7-10; Ezekiel 18:20-23)?
- What does the prophecy in Amos 9:11-12 refer to?
- What is the Christian attitude with respect to explaining prophecies in the Bible?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following question and record their answer:

- "In what respect do you need to change your view of explaining the prophetic books in the Bible?"

3. Personal sharing

Discuss personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

¹ *The text in the Greek Old Testament translation. "You will summon nations (plural) you know not, and nations (plural) that do not know you will hasten to you". Cf. Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 2:3.*

V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

1. Review previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other's previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.
Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

Hebrews 1:1-2

In the past God spoke to our forefathers
through the prophets
at many times and in various ways,
but in these last days
he has spoken to us by his Son.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV)

3. Memorisation of the Bible books

The 12 minor prophetic books:

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: A Prophecy about the Servant of the Lord

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step Bible Study method and study:

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

stanza by stanza

The 5 stanzas are: 52:13-15;

53:1-3;

53:4-6;

53:7-9;

53:10-12.

Isaiah 52

(1) ¹³ See, my servant will act wisely

(Or: he will prosper);

he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

¹⁴ Just as there were many who were appalled at him (Hebrew: you) —his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—

¹⁵ so will he sprinkle many nations

(Greek LXX: so will many nations marvel at him), and kings will shut their mouths because of him.

For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

Isaiah 53

(2) ¹ Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been
revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

(3) ⁴ Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace
was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

(4) 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.

⁸ By oppression (Or: from arrest) and judgment
he was taken away.

And who can speak of his descendants?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was stricken
(Or:
he was taken away.

Yet who of his generation considered
that he was cut off from the land of the living
for the transgression of my people,
to whom the blow was due?)

⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

(5) ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him
and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes (Hebrew: you make)
his life a guilt offering,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

¹¹ After the suffering of his soul,
he will see the light of life
(Dead Sea Scrolls, see also Septuagint. The Hebrew

Masoretic Text does not have 'the light of life')
and be satisfied;
by his knowledge

(Or: by knowledge of him)
my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great
(Or: many),

and he will divide the spoils with the strong
(Or: numerous),
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

2. Emphasis

The Messiah in this passage is Jesus Christ. He was crucified as a punishment for our sins.

This prophecy was spoken between 740-680 B.C., thus more than 700 years before it went into fulfilment!

The New Testament clearly teaches that this prophecy about the Servant of the LORD went into fulfilment in Jesus Christ!

- No sin or deceit was found in Christ (Compare Isaiah 53:5 with 1 Peter 2:22).
- Christ was led as a sheep to the slaughter (Compare Isaiah 53: 7-8 with Acts 8: 32-33).
- Christ gave his life as a ransom for many (Compare Isaiah 53:10 with Mark 10:45).
- Christ, who has no sin, was made to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (Compare Isaiah 53:10-11 with 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Christ was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Compare Isaiah 53:11-12 with Romans 4:25).
- Christ suffered, died and was raised from the dead (Compare Isaiah 53:5 with Mark 10:32-34).
- Christ had to suffer these things before he entered his glory (Luke 24:26).

3. Explanation for the group leader

(1) *The first stanza, Isaiah 52:13-15*

Prophecy

This stanza introduces *the theme* of this prophecy. '*The coming Messiah would only be exalted through suffering.*' In this stanza the LORD himself speaks.

52:13. “See, my servant will act wisely
(Or: he will prosper);
he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.”

Verse 13 describes his exaltation

His exaltation is his resurrection, ascension and enthronement.

52:14. “as there were many who were appalled at him
(Hebrew: you)
—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—”

Verse 14 describes his humiliation

His humiliation is his maltreatment by people that nearly made him unrecognisable.

52:15. “so will he sprinkle many nations
(Greek LXX: so will many nations marvel at him),
and kings will shut their mouths because of him.
For what they were not told, they will see,
and what they have not heard, they will understand.”

Verse 15 describes his glorification

It contrasts his humiliation in verse 14 with his future glorification above everything else. Nations and kings will be startled (will be alarmed, get a shock) in their bewilderment and marvel at his glory (cf. Isaiah 49:7). They will see and hear and understand things they were never told before. When people see the amazing change in the fate of Jesus Christ (his resurrection from the dead) they will be perplexed and amazed.

Fulfilment

The New Testament revelation speaks about the maltreatment of Jesus (John 19:1-3), but does not describe how he looked after his maltreatment.

The New Testament revelation clearly relates his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven and his enthronement when he assumed the position of King of the universe at the right hand of God. ‘The many’ who were appalled at his suffering are surpassed by ‘the many’ that got to know him after his glorification. They come from all the nations and include many of their leaders!

(2) *The second stanza, Isaiah 53:1-3*

Prophecy

The stanza describes *the humiliation* of the coming Messiah. ‘*He would be treated with unbelief, contempt and mockery*’. Here the prophet Isaiah speaks as representative of God’s true people.

53:1. “Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

Verse 1 says that in the spiritual area he would be treated with unbelief

This is a direct revelation from the LORD. No man would be able to devise such a plan of salvation. It is God’s intension that people accept this message by faith, but the prophet Isaiah and later the Messiah himself encountered much unbelief.

53:2. “He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”

Verse 2 says that in the social area he would be despised

It describes the humble origin of the Messiah. He would be born in the lineage of what once was a mighty tree (the royal house of king David), but later became a stump of a felled tree covered by dirt (the insignificant house of Joseph and Mary). He would have no natural beauty and would not be attractive. Nevertheless, he would grow up before the eyes of the LORD, who would watch over him and care for him so that he would reach his destiny!

53:3. “He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering
(Or: sickness).

Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

Verse 3 says that in the physical area he would be maltreated

Though he would identify himself with the oppressed and sick people, he would be maltreated so badly that people would hardly recognise him. The prophet Isaiah, as representative of God’s people, prophesies that Israel would not recognise (acknowledge) or honour him.

Fulfilment

The ancestors of Jesus Christ according to his human nature were not great saints. Judah committed adultery with his daughter-in-law (Tamar), Salmon married a prostitute (Rahab), Boaz married a despised Moabite (Ruth) and king David committed adultery with a married woman (Bathsheba) and murdered her husband (Uriah) (Matthew 1:3,5,6).

Jesus was raised in Nazareth in the despised province of Galilee, the region of Gentiles (Isaiah 9:1; Mark 1:9; John 1:46). God revealed himself in Jesus Christ and yet he was rejected in Galilee (Luke 4:29), in the Trans-Jordan area (Luke 8:37a) and in Judea (John 2:18; 5:16; 6:66; 7:12, 20, etc.). His hometown took offence at him

(Mark 6:3). His own brothers did not believe in him (John 7:5). He lived at a time when Israel as God's people was spiritually dry and dead (Matthew 21:43) and the royal house of David no longer ruled.

No one felt naturally attracted to him (Isaiah 53:1-3). The members of the government spat in his face and beat him with fists (Matthew 26:67). The soldiers stripped him of his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him, pressed a crown of thorns on his head, put a staff in his hand, knelt in front of him and mocked him. They spat on him and took his staff to strike him again and again on his head (with thorns) (Matthew 27:27-30). He was probably so disfigured that people in horror turned their face from him!

Jesus Christ came to that which was his own, but his own did not welcome (receive) him" (John 1:11)!

(3) *The third stanza, Isaiah 53:4-6*

Prophecy

This stanza describes *the gospel of salvation*. *The Messiah would suffer and die in the place of his people*. It contrasts 'our sins' with 'his suffering'.

53:4. "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted."

Verse 4 says that the Messiah would carry our sicknesses and sins

The words 'sicknesses' and 'sorrows' together summarise all human suffering, which is a consequence of the fall into sin (Not necessarily a consequence of personal sins).

53:5. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Verse 5 says that the Messiah would be crucified for our sins

This prophecy is remarkable, because crucifixion as a punishment for criminals was only introduced by the Romans 600 years after Isaiah (cf. Psalm 22:16)! It is also remarkable, because it clearly predicts *why* the Messiah had to die! It is a very clear prediction about the cause and the result of the death of the Messiah! He would be crucified due to the sins of his people, which includes Isaiah and all the Old Testament believers (besides all the New Testament believers)! His death would bring peace and healing to them.

53:6. "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Verse 6 says that the Messiah would be punished for our deliberate straying

The sin of man is deliberate, self-willed and obstinate independence from God. That is why the sin of man makes him guilty and punishable. In some way all people devise their own direction in life without God. And they refuse to walk the way of God following the Shepherd.

Fulfilment

Jesus Christ delivered many demon possessed people and healed many sick people in fulfilment of this prophecy (Matthew 8:16-17). While Jesus Christ took the suffering of his people on himself, people mistakenly thought that he suffered because God's plague struck him. They thought that he deserved to be punished by God (Matthew 26:65-66). Just like the Pharisees, the Israelites regarded suffering in general and Jesus' suffering in particular as a punishment for his own sins (especially: blaspheming God) and not as a punishment for their sins! They thought that they did not need to repent (Luke 5:31-32)!

At his crucifixion the soldiers hammered long iron nails through his hands and his feet into the cross. Then they lifted the cross in an upright position and dropped it into a hole with a thump. They let him hang on the iron nails in the hot sun as they did with cursed people (cf. Galatians 3:13)! This was an extreme method to make criminals suffer. This violent method of causing suffering finally broke the body of Jesus Christ and he died.

Old Testament prophecy had already prophesied that the Messiah would suffer for the transgressions and unrighteousness of his people. 'Transgression' means rebellion in the heart that is expressed in deliberate disobedience to God's teachings and commandments 'Iniquity' means a twisting of God's truths into half truths and lies. Jesus Christ died, not to improve us, but to pay for our sins. He did not only die for us, but died *in our place!* He literally carried *our sins* onto *his body* onto the cross (1 Peter 2:24). He was made to be 'sin' so that we who believe in him may be made 'righteous' (2 Corinthians 5:21). He thus actually exchanged places with us! Whoever believes in Jesus Christ will never be condemned (John 5:24), but is by God's grace declared 'righteous' in God's eyes. Henceforth the believer is regarded and treated as completely 'righteous' in God's eyes, that is, *all his sins* have been forgiven (Psalm 103:3; Micah 7:19; Hebrews 8:12). Whoever believes that Jesus Christ once in history died for all his people on the cross, is reconciled to God (1 Peter 3:18). God makes peace

with the believer (Romans 5:9-10) and the believers make peace with God (Romans 5:1) and with other people (Ephesians 2:14-15). 'God's peace' brings salvation and restoration to perfect wholeness. God's healing brings deliverance from suffering.

The 'root' and essence of sin is 'independence from God' or 'self-sufficiency' (the "I" sitting on the throne), turning away from the Shepherd by living outside God's goal for one's life, by open rebellion and transgression against God's Word and by secret twisting of God's Word in order to justify oneself.

The 'fruit' of sin is 'doing what God forbids' and 'neglecting to do what God commands'.

The LORD laid the iniquity of us all on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ took our guilt, shame, punishment, misery and suffering on him, so that we who believe may receive his complete righteousness and holiness by grace (1 Corinthians 1:30)!

(4) *The fourth stanza, Isaiah 53:7-9*

Prophecy

It describes *the complete submission of the Messiah (Jesus Christ) to God's plan, namely, 'salvation by means of suffering by substitution'*.

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."

Verse 7 describes how the Messiah would suffer

He would be like a sheep led to the slaughter without opening its mouth. He would suffer without offering resistance. He would willingly submit to his suffering! Although he would be maltreated, he freely submitted to oppression, because it would be the only possible way for salvation to go in fulfilment!

53:8. "By oppression (Or: from arrest) and judgment he was taken away.

And who can speak of his descendants?

For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was stricken

(Or:

By an unjust sentence *in trial*

he was led away *to be crucified.*)

Yet who of his generation considered

that he was cut off from the land of the living

for the transgression of my people, /

to whom the blow was due?)

Verse 8 describes how the Messiah would die

He would not die peacefully, but as a criminal that had been sentenced by an unjust worldly judge (the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman governor, Pilate). After his unjust trial he was led away to be crucified.

The second line: "Yet who of his generation considered" is better translated by: "Who could discover his dwelling place?" The prophet Isaiah laments that Israel had rejected her Messiah, had sentenced him to death and had removed him to an unknown place. During the Old Testament period until the time the disciples mourned the death of Jesus, little was known about life after death. During the Old Testament period some people were raised from the dead, only to die again. But never has anybody been resurrected from the dead so that he would never die again!

53:9. "He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth."

Verse 9 describes how the Messiah would be buried

The unjust authorities had planned to give him a dishonourable funeral; they assigned him a grave with the wicked (cf. Isaiah 14:18-20; Jeremia 8:1-2; 36:30). But God set their plans aside and gave him the grave of a rich man: cut out of rock (cf. Isaiah 22:16). This would happen because he was completely righteous.

Fulfilment

During his life Jesus Christ was called a deceiver (John 7:12), demon-possessed (John 7:20), a (despised) Samaritan (John 8:48) and raving mad (John 10:19-20). Nevertheless, when people hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate. At his trials he suffered under false accusations and brutal beatings, but he made no threats towards his accusers and persecutors (1 Peter 2:22-23)! In complete meekness he submitted himself to maltreatment that disfigured him. He submitted to the public shame of being crucified naked, derided and rejected. Not once did he defend himself!

After his anxious struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, his maltreatment by soldiers and his condemnation by unjust judges he was crucified with two notorious criminals so that everyone would think he was a criminal that deserved crucifixion. He really died, because the prophecy says that he was "cut off from the land of the living".

Because Jesus was condemned as a criminal the authorities had planned to give him a dishonourable burial. In his time this would be a terrible humiliation.

But God set their evil plans aside and gave him a new tomb cut out of rock. This tomb belonged to a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60). This was very great honour! His honourable burial was the first sign that the LORD regarded his Servant (the Messiah) as blameless! He had done no unrighteousness, he had committed no violence and he had not spoken a lie.

Although Jesus Christ was in himself perfectly blameless and innocent (Hebrews 4:15), he willingly submitted himself to suffer as our substitute (cf. John 10:17-18; 2 Corinthians 5:21)!

(5) *The fifth stanza, Isaiah 53:10-12*

Prophecy

It describes *God's reward* for the Messiah and his ultimate glory.

53:10. "Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes (Hebrew: you make) his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring (Hebrew: zera = seed) and prolong his days (i.e. he will be resurrected and live forever), and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand."

Verse 10 describes the completed work of salvation of the Messiah

He was not a victim of murder, because his death and resurrection were a part of God's eternal plan.

This is the turning point of the prophecy!

The question was: 'Why must God's Anointed (the Messiah) die when he was completely innocent?' Modern religious people argue that God only honours his prophets and would never allow his prophet to undergo a dishonourable death. But they argue from a human point of view.

The answer is that through the death of Jesus Christ, God's unique and eternal plan of salvation would go into fulfilment! The suffering and death of his Servant (the Messiah) was an essential part of God's eternal plan. God chose Jesus Christ before the creation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). Jesus Christ had to die – it was a divine 'must' (Luke 24:26; Matthew 26:54), because this was the only way to make atonement for sins! Moreover, it went into fulfilment, because the Old Testament prophecy had to go into fulfilment!

The death of Jesus Christ was on the one hand the unjust condemnation by the political and religious judges (leaders) of the world and on the other hand the completely just condemnation of the sins of people by

the Judge of the universe! Although the Old Testament animal sacrifices were types (illustrations) of substitute sacrifices for sin and guilt (also known in other religions), the personal and completely willing sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross was unthinkable!

53:11. "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life (Dead Sea Scrolls, see also Septuagint. The Hebrew Masoretic Text does not have 'the light of life') and be satisfied; by his knowledge (Or: by knowledge of him) my righteous servant will justify many, and (Or: because) he will bear their iniquities."

Verse 11 describes the continuing work of salvation of the Messiah

Once more the LORD himself is speaking. The suffering of the Messiah would not be limited to his body, but would involve his whole being (his body and soul). The Messiah would see the fruit of his suffering and his work of salvation, namely, many believers, and this would satisfy and comfort him. By the Messiah's knowledge of God and God's revelation (the eternal plan of salvation) (cf. Isaiah 11:2; 50:4, his prophetic office) the Messiah would justify many people.

The Messiah would be the Servant of the LORD, the Mediator that fulfils the LORD's eternal plan of salvation. Although the unjust judges of the world had condemned him as being 'unrighteous', the LORD explicitly calls him 'righteous' (Isaiah 11:4-5)! It is precisely the righteousness of the Messiah that would be the ground why only he (the Messiah, Jesus Christ) would justify (make righteous) 'the many', that is, the great mass of people who would believe in him (cf. Daniel 11:33; 12:3; Romans 5:19)! Only he would bear their iniquities. In other religions people have to earn or work for their own imperfect 'righteousness' (because it will always be incomplete and tainted by sin). But according to the message of the Bible people freely receive the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18a). In history only Jesus Christ bore the unrighteousness of his people on his own body onto the cross (1 Peter 2:24)! Besides Jesus Christ there is no Saviour of sins and no other way to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)!

53:12. "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great (or: the many), and he will divide the spoils with the strong (or: numerous), (God intends to say: "I will give him as his portion 'the many' and as his spoils 'the numerous'.") because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

*Verse 12 describes the inheritance of the Messiah
The inheritance of Jesus Christ is the many people that are saved.*

The Hebrew text does not intend to say that the Messiah would only receive 'a part of the many' as his inheritance, but rather that he would receive 'the many' as 'the whole' of his inheritance (cf. Romans 5:19)! Because the Messiah would bear the iniquities (unrighteousness) of 'the many' and thereby make them righteous (verse 11), the LORD would give him 'the many' as his spoils (prize, reward) (verse 12)!

His substitute suffering (suffering in our place) would be the reason for his exaltation. He would pour out his life, he would be counted a criminal and he would even intercede for those who crucify him (cf. Luke 24:23-24).

Fulfilment

Through his death and resurrection Jesus Christ began to multiply his spiritual descendents (Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 55:5; John 12:24,32).

Although as to his divine nature Jesus Christ lives for ever and never dies, as to his human nature he died and was resurrected. He says: "I (as to my divine nature) am (for ever) (present continuous tense) the Living One. I (as to my humane nature) once for all became dead (aorist tense) and behold I (as to my divine nature and as to my human nature) am (after my resurrection for ever) (present continuous tense) the Living One (alive for ever)" (Revelation 1:18). In his weakened human nature (after his birth) Jesus Christ died once in history for all his people. And in his glorious human nature (after his resurrection) he lives for ever (cf. Romans 1:3-4).

Through Jesus Christ God fulfils his eternal plan with the creation (Colossians 1:16-17) and his eternal plan with the restoration (including salvation) (Acts 3:21; Ephesians 1:9-10).

Because only Jesus Christ fulfilled God's holy and righteous requirement (Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4), only he can make 'the many' righteous. 'The many' are those who have received God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17-19)! 'The many' are all the believers, all the elect in history (cf. Matthew 25:31; John 17:3,12; Romans 11:25-26).

The Messiah, Jesus Christ was counted among the criminals (Luke 22:37). He willingly poured out his life (John 10:11,18; Philippians 2:5-8). He is now exalted above everyone (Philippians 2:9-11)!

The patriarch Abraham inherited the promise that in his Descendent (Hebrew: the Seed) all the nations on the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:17-18). Jesus Christ is that Seed (Galatians 3:16). Jesus Christ became the Great Patriarch who inherited the reality of that promise (2 Corinthians 1:20)! He is the Great King who has 'the many' he justified as the citizens of his kingdom (cf. Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 1:5-6). All the people he justified (by imputing/ascribing his righteousness to them) belong to him.

He is the Great Mediator and the Great High Priest who intercedes not only for those who crucified him (Luke 22:34), but also for those who become his children in the future (John 17:20; Acts 2:39; Hebrews 7:25).

VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

Pray with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

Hand out the preparation for the next gathering.