

Superhero Syndrome

Presentation Handout

Popularity of Superhero Movies

- Explosion of movies made in the last decade, 11 alone from 2018-2021
- Avengers: Endgame itself grossed 2.8 billion worldwide—that’s 15 round trips to the sun if each dollar were equated to a mile.
- Top three grossing Superhero movies (2018-2021) grossed 6.6 billion worldwide alone.
- Why such popularity? What draws us to superheroes—superhero syndrome?
- Some commentators think we humans:
 - are looking for some sort of role models of what it means to be a “good” human being.
 - want someone to look up to outside of ourselves
 - want someone to show us how to achieve the good we so badly long for
 - long for someone to show us what it “looks like” to live this good, making the right choices in the muck of life, succeeding where most fail
- Ironically, especially for Christians, we have already been given this perfect example (not a superhero) of how to attain this ultimate good, living it out in right choices with the power we need in Jesus Christ, and He did it in the muck of life, in the midst of great suffering!
- God saw our human longing for someone to look up to, for someone to show us the way, and out of loving pity condescended from His almighty throne to give us His very Self in the person of His one and only Son, Jesus.
- He, who by His divine nature is infinitely *un*-relatable to us, crossed that infinite threshold to become as relatable as it gets—He became *one of us!*

Adapted from: *Why are superheroes so popular?* | Voyage | [Comics](#) | by Julian Sicam

Effects of Sin

- **Fear, guilt, and shame** {[Genesis 3:8-10](#)}
 - Adam & Eve did a whole lot of fearing and hiding, and so do we still!
- **Self-centered and self-sufficient** {[Genesis 3:6](#)}
 - Adam & Eve took on God’s prerogative of deciding right and wrong—“I don’t need God’s help. I have this...! I’m “god.”
- **Damaged and alienated human relationships** {[Genesis 3:12-13](#)}
 - This is where the “human blame-game” finger-pointing began—“Not me..., him/her!”
- **Estranged from God** {[Genesis 3:8-10](#)}
 - Here’s the main spiritual “fallout” from sin—alienation from God as human beings, feeling fearful of God along with distrust, leeriness, and condemnation.

- **Helplessly enslaved to Satan and sin {Genesis 3:15}**
 - No human being wants to admit this one. In a self-deceived kind of way we feel we have the tiger-by-the-head (believing we're in control), when actually, we have the tiger-by-the-tail (we're not in control), and the tiger is having us for dinner, and we don't even realize it. That's being enslaved to Satan and sin!
 - We desperately need some kind of outside-of-ourselves help to deal with it all!

God Himself Is the Answer {Genesis 3:15}

- **God Himself takes responsibility**
 - God's grand answer to the sin problem and our salvation-restoration?—Himself!! He's the ultimate answer and help for our sinfulness/sinful natures and the effects of sin in our lives! He's better than any superhero!
 - God doesn't ask for humanity's help to deal with the sin problem by having us promise to do better in the future. He knows we can't! So, He steps in to take responsibility Himself instead.
 - Notice God is not speaking to Adam & Eve (sinful human beings) in **Genesis 3:15**. No! He's actually speaking to Satan. This spiritual war is between the two of them because God has taken on the responsibility for dealing with sin and redeeming human beings from its effects.
 - Here's what God promised to do:
- **God implants enmity/hatred for sin**
 - We can't help ourselves. That's the problem with sinful human beings and their sinful natures. We naturally sin without God's grace to resist, much like someone who can't help resisting chocolate because of their sweet-tooth.
 - Our only hope as human beings is God "implanting" His hatred for sin into our psyches through His grace that is given to every human being {**Titus 2:11-12, NIV**}.
- **God suffers sin's penalty—death**
 - We'll examine this beautiful truth in our next presentation—Hope 02.
- **God provides the "Seed"—the new Adam**
 - God's dealing with the sin problem and humanity's redemption and restoration, takes a strange, weird twist (at least from our human perspective).

The "Seed"—the "New Adam" {Genesis 3:15}

- God *literally* becomes the Answer to humanity's sin problem in this "Seed" of the woman—singular based on the use of the singular pronoun "He." God's answer becomes an "inside job" by entering into the human race, experiencing what they experience, and miraculously overcoming Satan where they failed in this "Seed!"
 - This "Seed" theme continues in **Genesis 12:7** in God's everlasting/new covenant promise to Abram/Abraham. The promise to bless all nations/the entire world in Abraham is accomplished through this "Seed"—singular in this verse in the original Hebrew language.
 - Paul picks up this theme from the Old Testament to proclaim that this "Seed" is indeed a singular person, though it can be used to describe a group of people,

fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of **Jesus Christ** {**Galatians 3:16**}! He is our **only** hope!! We're doomed as a human race without Him!

- In **1 Corinthians 15:22, 45, 47**; Paul continues to “paint” this amazing truth of Jesus entering into the human race as the “Seed” through the analogy of Christ being “last Adam”—in essence a “new Adam” who creates a new humanity through His life, death, and resurrection {**2 Corinthians 5:17**}, redeeming those who by faith accept His new spiritual creation into their lives. Jesus overcame where Adam failed! This becomes God focal point in His answer to the sin problem and the redemption of sinful humanity.
- The prophet Isaiah gives us some practical examples of what it means that Christ Jesus is this “Seed,” the “last/new Adam” in what have been dubbed the “Servant Songs” in **Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3**. In these passages we discover a special “Servant” of God (again singular) who God uses to reveal His plan to save humanity, live as a new Israel and a new humanity, and bless the whole world (Gentiles)! **This is where God’s plan gets crazy exciting!!**

The “Servant” {**Book of Isaiah**}

▪ **Isaiah 42:1-9**

- Someone other than the Servant is speaking {**v. 1**}.
 - True living, particularly the Christian life, is not one of self-sufficiency but God-sufficiency
- The Holy Spirit’s indwelling power is how this Servant successfully accomplishes God’s mission and why He has the assurance of God’s delight {**vv. 1, 4, 6**}.
 - Our sufficiency for ministry, our life calling, is in God’s power
- The One making the promises to the Servant is the Lord—God the Father, whose righteousness the “Servant” relies on {**v. 6**}.
 - God takes responsibility for empowering our Christian walk and our ministry for Him, even spiritually “holding” our hand in His righteousness.
 - Only God’s righteousness (right-doing) is what makes it possible for human beings to live faithful to God in heart obedience!
- The Servant is the embodiment—the faithful living out of—God’s everlasting/new covenant promise to bless all of humanity through Abraham {**v. 6** -> **Genesis 12:3, 7**}.
 - Abraham along with Israel in general failed to live out God’s covenant promise faithfully (and we fail too), but the “Servant” will and has been faithful to Him.

▪ **Isaiah 49:1-13**

- Two separate Beings speak—first the Servant {**v. 1**}, then God {**vv. 8-13**}.
 - God answers the sin problem along with providing salvation and restoration for us by working together with the Servant, through Him.
- The Servant becomes a human being {**vv. 1, 5**}.
 - Amazingly, God enters into the human experience through His Servant to accomplish what Abraham, the Israelites, and we failed to do.
 - This is why the Servant is called the new Israel, new humanity, new/last Adam as you compare **44:1-2a** where the servant is Israel (plural). The Servant with God’s power finally succeeds in living out God’s covenant promises—redeeming

fallen humanity and live as humanity and Israel were originally designed to live, which glorifies & vindicates God's character from Satan's maligning {v. 3}.

- That is why the Servant is God's salvation/redemption for Israel and all of humanity (Gentiles) {vv. 5b, 6, 8}—the fulfillment of God's everlasting/new covenant promise to Abraham to bless all nations/whole world {Genesis 12:3}.
- The Servant lives by faith in the power of God the Father, not Himself {vv. 5c, 8}.
 - The only way we can live the Christian walk is through the faith of God and faith in God, which is a gift He gives to all human beings {Romans 12:3; Galatians 2:20}.
- **Isaiah 50:4-11**
 - The Servant is speaking again {vv. 4a, 5a, 7a, 8a, 9a, 10}.
 - God is the Servant's help {vv. 7a, 9a}. He lives by faith in God's power not His own!
 - The Servant is our salvation and example of how we too can live faithful to God. He's the one who lives His life in and through ours through the Holy Spirit's power.
 - God helps the Servant grow spiritually through connect with Himself {vv. 4-5}.
 - A heart connection is the only way we too can grow in God. It's more than an accumulation of biblical facts as important as they are.
 - Servant = Jesus {v. 6} as the prophecies of what would happen to Him were fulfilled exactly in His life—back beaten/whipped {Matthew 27:26} and spit in the face and shamed {Matthew 26:67; 27:30; Mark 14:65; 15:19}.
 - Jesus is God, who in partnership with God the Father and the Holy Spirit (the Trinity/Godhead) are the authors of humanity's salvation without any human achievement on our part—the objective gospel good news!
 - Again, we're reminded God took the responsibility for the sin problem in our world and in our lives; personally, literally becoming the Answer in Himself, in humanity! What an amazing God!!!
- **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**
 - We will explore this *Servant Song* in our next presentation—Hope 02.
 - As you read it, watch for the key word **bruise** and how it connects back to **Genesis 3:15**, revealing to what extent God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were/are committed to redeem and transform sinful humanity/us.
- **Isaiah 61:1-3**
 - The Servant/Jesus is speaking {v. 1a}.
 - Again, we're reminded the Servant/Jesus' mission could only be accomplished through the Holy Spirit's indwelling power in His life.
 - This is the only way we too can live for God in our world is through the Holy Spirit indwelling empowering!
 - The Servant/Jesus' ministry was one of freedom/liberation from the “prison” of sin, fear, shame, hiding from God and others and/or living in one's own self-sufficiency.

LIVING CHOICE: Will you trust God and Jesus (His Servant) as your only hope for your sin, lostness, desperation and failures, leaning into Him for your salvation and transformation?