

## The Suffering Servant

**Introduction:** One of the more well known prophecies concerning the Christ is found in Isaiah 53. It is the last in what are referred to as Servant Songs. They are looking forward to the Messiah and describing Him and His identity and mission. Today we will turn our attention to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. We noted a couple of weeks ago this is a prophecy of the cross that is spoken from the perspective of one looking up at the cross. Let us see this prophecy and what we learn about Jesus.

### I. The Rejected Servant: 1-3

- A. We find the beginning of this chapter with the question, who has believed our report?
  - 1. We find this referenced in John 12:37-41 and Romans 10:16 to show that Israel rejected the Messiah and in doing so, fulfilled the idea of this passage.
  - 2. This shows that the suffering servant would be one who was rejected by men.
- B. He also describes the arm of the Lord being revealed.
  - 1. The arm of the Lord is a metaphor for God's mighty power. It is used in Isaiah 51:9-10 to refer to the work of God during the exodus.
  - 2. In this chapter (and ultimately the person of Christ) we find the arm of the Lord being revealed but it is a rejected Messiah. It is not the conquering King that many were expecting.
- C. He grew up like a tender shoot: vs 2
  - 1. This takes us back to the imagery of 11:1. The previous chapter provides the imagery of forests being cut down (Israel being taken down by Assyria and then Assyria being judged). Then from the remaining stump you have the shoot of Jesse shooting up and becoming prosperous.
  - 2. This speaks to the humble beginnings of the Messiah. He has no stately birth, no regal adornments, no human glory. The point is people aren't following Him for external reasons: cf. I Samuel 16:6
  - 3. The people wanted a regal crown, Jesus wore a crown of thorns. They wanted an exalted king, Jesus was a humble Servant.
- D. A Man of Sorrows and Acquainted with Grief:
  - 1. The Messiah would be one who was largely despised and rejected by men.
  - 2. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. This would be the reason many did not receive Him. He was not the conquering hero that many wanted but one who was suffering for sins. They viewed Him as one who suffered for His own wrong doing but the very next verse shows us He suffered for OUR iniquities.
- E. We see then that this suffering servant is one who would be rejected by men.

### II. The Suffering Servant: 4-6

- A. As we just alluded to, Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief because He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.
  - 1. We need to pause to understand what this means. Consider Matthew 8:16-17
    - a. In what sense did Jesus take their infirmities and bear their sicknesses? He didn't become a leper, He took the sickness away.
    - b. This is the same word in Matthew 3:11 where John says he is not fit to 'remove' the Messiah's sandals.
    - c. It is important to note that this is not teaching that all the sins of the world were transferred to Jesus. Rather, He took them away.
  - 2. We esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God.
    - a. That is, those who saw Him suffering viewed Him as suffering for His own transgressions.
    - b. Think about the ways they railed against Him on the cross:
      - He saved others, He cannot save Himself. Matthew 27:42
      - Let Him save Himself, if this is the Christ of God, His chosen One! Luke 23:35
      - He trusts in God, let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him. Matthew 27:43
- B. By His wounds we are healed:
  - 1. In this section we learn that it is not for His own transgressions that the Messiah would suffer but for our own.
  - 2. This shows us part of the purpose for the suffering of the Messiah. That is sacrifice to remove or atone for our sins. Not to have our sins transferred, but an offering for sin.
- C. The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him:
  - 1. The reason for Jesus being pierced for our transgressions is further explained in verse 6. We have all gone astray. This echoes the idea in Romans 3:10-12
  - 2. Therefore the Lord gave Him up for our sins:
    - a. The LXX renders this 'The Lord gave Him up for our sins.'
    - b. The same word caused to fall on Him is used in verse 12 and is translated interceded.

- c. It is the same greek word used in Romans 8:32 (He was delivered up) and Ephesians 5:2 (He gave Himself up).
- D. The picture of the Servant (Messiah) here is one of suffering on behalf of others. He offers Himself to provide cleansing and healing from sin: John 1:29

### III. The Submissive Servant: 7-9

- A. We get the picture of Jesus here as a submissive sheep, offering Himself as a sacrifice willingly.
  - 1. Peter applies this idea to Christ: 1 Peter 2:23-24
  - 2. This is why we see Jesus willingly going to Jerusalem and not resisting His arrest and subsequent death.
- B. He was stricken for the transgressions of my people:
  - 1. Many view Jesus as a vicarious sacrifice. That He died in my place, He took the punishment I deserved. 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 10:6, 8 (LXX: sin offering 50 times)
    - I was condemned to die but Jesus took my place.
    - He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own.
    - Bearing shame, and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood.
    - His body given in our stead.
  - 2. The picture of Isaiah here is that Jesus died on behalf of my sins. He is the offering for my sin. My sins were not transferred to Him, He did not become guilty of sin. He offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice through which I could be forgiven.
    - a. There is also the fact that the animal for the sin offering had to be pure and unblemished. For Jesus to literally become sin would mean He was an unholy and blemished sacrifice.
    - b. This leads us to some blasphemous pictures of our Savior.
- C. Consequences of this Substitution:
  - 1. Substitution does not provide the picture of God forgiving sins. If Jesus paid our punishment, then there was no forgiveness: Matthew 18:23-27
  - 2. Second, if the punishment for my sin was paid, I no longer need to be concerned about obedience to God. Spurgeon said 'If Christ has died for you, you can never be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sins He will not punish you. How can God be just if He punished Christ, the substitute, and then man himself afterward?'
  - 3. This also leads to universalism or limited atonement. Introduction to Christian Theology: If Christ bore the sinner's punishment as a substitute, then the sinner is unconditionally free from it, for both the sinner and the substitute cannot be punished for the same offense.
  - 4. I think many of us are appalled at the statements and we wonder how they could reach such conclusions. The reality is they are just being consistent. If Jesus took my place, if Jesus took my punishment, these are the natural conclusions.
- D. Jesus shed His blood to provide the cleansing from sin. He is the perfect, spotless lamb who died so that my sins could be forgiven. It was not punishment, it was sacrificial atonement. Ephesians 5:2

### IV. The Victorious Servant: 10-12

- A. These last few verses show us a picture of the victorious servant: Though the Servant would suffer, God would see and be satisfied with the end result, that is, He will justify many and many will be made righteous.
- B. The suffering of the Servant would provide redemption and freedom from sin. God would forgive His people of their iniquity and remember their sin no more.
- C. This is not the picture of the Father turning His face away in disgust. It is one who looks upon the cross as a sweet smelling sacrifice: Ephesians 5:2

**Conclusion:** We see here a beautiful picture of the Suffering Servant. One who would offer Himself to redeem His people from sin and provide forgiveness through His blood (Ephesians 1:7). Jesus was the offering for our sin. Will we live our lives in obedience so we can enjoy the blessings of that redemption?