

Lamar E. Cooper, Sr.
Interim President
Criswell College

The Song of the Suffering Servant

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

Introduction

This "song" is without a doubt, the best known and greatest of all the Servant Songs of Isaiah. Barry G. Webb, an outstanding Old Testament scholar says, "This fourth Song is the most elaborated and poignant of them all. It is the jewel in the crown of Isaiah's theology, the focal point of his vision." In this song, 52:13 - 53:12, we are appalled at the inhumane treatment to which He was subjected. But, we rejoice in His exaltation and rise to the right hand of the Father. We will trace from beginning to end, the significant points about the Suffering Servant found in this passage. As we proceed, carefully note how every part of this song has been fulfilled by Jesus.

- 1. The Servant will be rejected but exalted as ordained by the Lord, 52:13**
 - The Song opens with a twofold prophetic summary statement; first, the Servant will suffer greatly, be humiliated; second, at the end, He will be highly exalted.
 - Behold, the Hebrew means "look at this," and "pay careful attention to this."
 - Note "My Servant shall deal prudently," literally, "prosper" and "succeed." It is the Hebrew *sekil*, and describes a person wise and skillful so that He does well. Jesus impressed Jewish leaders when he went to Jerusalem for His *Bar Mitzvah*, see Lk 2:45-50, but they immediately got over it, v. 50.
 - He was shamefully arrested on trumped-up-charges, Jn 18:38, abandoned Matt 26:55-56, ridiculed, Matt 27:39-44, beaten, Lk 22:63-65, scourged, Jn 19:1, nailed to a cross, Jn 19:17-19, killed, Jn 19:30-33.
 - But, He was lifted up, Acts 1:9-11; Heb 1:3, 8:1; 7:25.
- 2. The Servant was severely beaten and scourged, 52:14**
 - His appearance was marred, more than any man, because he was "beaten," Lk 22:63-65.
 - His form was marred more than any human being, because He was "scourged" by the Romans, Jn 19:1.
 - See Psalm 22:1-31 for the psalmist's view of the Servant's fate
- 3. The Servant stuns the world, yet the world is blessed, 52:15**
 - The Hebrew *yazzeḥ* has been translated "startle" or "sprinkle," so which is it?
 - On one had the nations, kings, were stunned by the inhumane crucifixion, at the same time, the word can refer to the purification rite by which blood was "sprinkled," as a purification on the Day of Atonement, Lev 4:6; 14:7; see also Ex 24:6-8; 1 Pet 1:2; Heb 9:13-14.
 - The world did understand, but saw the transaction; had not heard of the Servant's role of blood atonement, but were given access, Isa 52:15b
- 4. The Servant's arrival and sojourn were humble and unpretentious, 53:1-3**
 - The two questions of this verse are spoken by the Jews who will not believe that the Servant of the Lord could or would come to such an ignominious estate, see

Paul's statement in Romans 10:16, where he quotes Isaiah 53:1. But, He also comes as the Branch, the root [sprout] of Jesse/David.

- There was nothing stunning or impressive about Jesus, noted by the Jews, v. 3. He was the earthly son of an obscure Jewish carpenter from Nazareth, Matt 13:54-55; Mk 6:1-3. Galilee was known as Galilee of the Gentiles, Matt 4:15 Isa 9:1. When Philip found Nathaniel and told him he had found the Messiah, he replied, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? [Galilee]," Jn 7:52. Galileans were regarded unclean, and when Pilate killed some while they were engaged in sacrificing, it was considered a deserved judgment, Lk 13:1-2.
- As a Galilean, and untrained Rabbi, He was rejected by the Jewish leaders and a large part of the Jewish population. He was a man of sorrows or pain of all kinds - healing many sick and infirmed. He knew all about grief.

5. The Servant's mission was to be our redeemer, 53:4-6

- Notice the use of the plural pronouns, "our" 4 times; "we" 3 times; "us" 1 time. Those who formerly rejected Him, come to the realization that they have this eightfold benefit: (1) He has borne our griefs, the sufferings and sorrows of life, 4a. (2) It was God's doing that He carried our sorrows, all the pains of life, 4b; cf. 1:5-6. (3) He was wounded, literally "pierced through" for our transgressions [rebellions], 5a, see Ps 22:16; Zech 12:10; Jn 19:34. (4) He was bruised for our iniquities [crookedness], 5b. (5) He was chastened by God on our behalf, 5c. (6) He received stripes [cutting blows or slashing wounds] to provide our healing, 5d; Ps 103:3; 1 Pet 2:24. (7) He rectified our wayward walk and self centered directions, 6a. (8) He received the punishment for all our iniquity [perversions], 6b.
- THIS IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT, See Leviticus 16:1-34 and 17:1-16, but it now includes all the sins of all who believe, and all means ALL, 6c
- It is clear that Peter had 53:4-6 in mind when he wrote, see 1 Pet 2:21-25.

6. The Servant was our sinless and silent bearer of our transgressions, 53:7-9

- He was oppressed and afflicted for us, and did it without complaint. He was like a lamb led to the slaughter, and a sheep before its shearers, v. 7; Jn 1:29. This highlights the innocence and voluntary submission of the Servant in carrying out His assignment, Matt 26:63; 27:12-14; Mk 15:5; Lk 23:9; Jn 19:9.
- The Servant, Jesus, was taken from prison, arrested on false charges, Matt 26:59-60. "Who will declare His generation?" This is a difficult verse to translate. It means "Which of His people will tell the story of His plight?" i.e. no one, not even His disciples came to His defense. When He was arrested all of His disciples fled in fear, Matt 26:56, see 26:31; Zech 13:7. He was "cut off," killed for the "transgressions" [rebellions, Heb. *Pasha*] of My people [Israel and the Gentiles, cf. Isa 49:6], v. 8.
- The grave of the Servant, Jesus, was made with the wicked, [two thieves] Lk 23:32-33 and rich [Joseph of Arimathea], Lk 23:50-56, because He was innocent of violence, and deception, i.e. He was transparent, v. 9.

7. The Servant will claim and fulfill all the promises of God, 53:10-12, 2 Cor 1:20, Rom 15:7-13, Rev 5:13

- God was pleased with His Servant, Son, Jesus, Matt 3:17;12:18; Mk 1:11; 9:7; Lk 3:22; 9:35, because He knew that Jesus would submit to give His life once for all, a redemption for all, Heb 9:28; 10:10. Therefore, He was pleased to bruise [literally "crush" Him], 10a; see Lev 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6.
- God was please with His Servant's willingness to make Him an offering for our sins, Jn 1:29; Heb 10:1-10. He was the first fruit of a great harvest of souls to follow, a fact that we celebrate every Easter Sunday, Acts 26:22-23; 1 Cor 15:20, 23; 1 Pet 1:3 Rev 1:5, 18. Therefore, He shall see His seed, prolong His days to eternity, and prosper the pleasure of the Father, v. 10b.
- The Servant shall see that His sacrifice satisfies the sins of all who believe and receive His grace, v. 11; Eph 2:8-9. His death does not spell defeat, but victory. In death, His righteousness shall result in the justification of many, because he will bear their iniquities [perversities, crookedness]. One cannot escape the idea of substitutionary atonement often denied by liberal scholars.
- The Servant's victory is complete and the spoils of battle will be His. He claims the right to life everlasting to everyone who believes, Jew or Gentile, Rom 1:16. Crucified with transgressors, He bore the sins of those who believe and made intercession for all, Heb 7:25.

Conclusion

This is the greatest affirmation in Scripture of the many facets of the Servant of the Lord, who is our Lord Jesus Christ. He appears here as One Full of Wisdom, as our Servant Who Deals Prudently, as our Great High Priest, as our Lamb of Sacrifice, as the Cleanser of Many Nations, as Our Inconspicuous Companion, as our Suffering Servant, as our Silent Benefactor, As Our Faithful Healer, as our Source of Forgiveness, as our Eternal Sin Offering, as our Tender Plant, as the Root and Branch of David, as Our Man of Sorrows, as Our Sin Bearer, as Our Iniquity Cleanser, as Our Transgression Pardoner, as Healer of Our Stripes with His, as The Bruised Victim for Our Pleasure, as Rewarder of His Satisfactory Labor, as the Justification for Many, as the Recipient of the Portion of the Great, as Our Numbered One with and for Transgressors, and as our Everlasting Intercessor, See 61:1-3; Rev 5:13.

Even So, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Amen, and Amen