



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Suffering Servant

ISAIAH 52:13 – 53:12

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None of us enjoy or appreciate suffering. However suffering of different kinds is something each and every one of us face because we live in a sinful, fallen world. We may suffer illness or physical challenges. We may suffer the loss of loved ones or friends. We may suffer difficulties and failures in our jobs and careers. We may suffer wrongdoing at the hands of others.

Not only is suffering something that is common to all people, those who trust Christ and choose to live for Him can expect suffering particularly because of their faith. We are reminded that those who desire to live godly lives will suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus said that the world will hate His followers just as they hated Him (John 15:18-19) and that those who face suffering because of Him are blessed (Matt. 5:11-12). So whether it is suffering common to all people or suffering particular to followers of Christ, we should not be surprised when we face suffering in our lives.

What is surprising is when we read of the suffering of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That the one who was God and equal with God (Philippians 2:6) and the one who created the universe (John 1:3) would suffer is something that is quite difficult for us to understand. This is the very thing Jesus explained to His discouraged followers on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. He taught them how the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (the Old Testament) all pointed to how the Messiah must suffer and die.

We have looked at several examples in the Law of Moses (the first five books of the Old Testament) that point to the affliction of Christ. Now we will look at what is probably the best example in the Prophets that points to the coming of a suffering Savior, the coming that was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

THE WRITINGS OF THE PROPHETS POINT TO A SERVANT WHO WOULD SUFFER

Jesus spoke of how the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms all speak of and point to Him. The Law refers to the first five books of the Old Testament. The Prophets include Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and the books we often call the major and minor prophets (“major” and “minor” simply referring to size, not

importance). When we use the term “prophet” we often think of one who predicts the future. In Old Testament use “prophet” simply referred to one who proclaimed God’s word, though his message may well have included truth regarding what would take place in the future.

Throughout the Old Testament there are nearly 300 prophecies that were fulfilled in the birth, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ. We will only take time to look at the most vivid description of what Jesus would do on our behalf – written 700 years before His birth. This is the description of the Suffering Servant found in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. We do not have space to include this whole passage in our notes, so I encourage you to get your Bible and read this whole section. We will only recount here the part that so vividly depicts how Jesus would suffer on our behalf:

4Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. 6All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. Isaiah 53:4-6

Though there are many passages in the Old Testament that testify to the suffering Christ would endure, nowhere else does the gospel shine so clearly than here in Isaiah 53.

THE ACCOUNT OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Isaiah, speaking on behalf of God, writes of “My servant”. This servant is clearly referring to Jesus. Peter quotes Is. 53:5 and applies it to Jesus (1 Peter 2:24). In Acts 8:35 the Ethiopian Eunuch is reading Is. 53 and Philip, beginning with this passage, preached Jesus to him. Jesus even said of Himself, “...**The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many**” (Mark 10:45).

THE SERVANT WOULD SUFFER GREATLY

Let us consider briefly the suffering described in this passage. His appearance and form were marred (52:14). He was despised and

BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDY: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON**, TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAY 8:00 A.M. THURSDAY 12:00 NOON** TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

West Virginia

The Suffering Servant

forsaken, full of sorrows and grief (53:3). He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted (53:4). He was pierced through, crushed, chastened, and scourged (53:5). He was oppressed, afflicted, and led like a lamb to slaughter (53:7). He was ultimately killed and buried (53:8-9). We need only read the accounts of Jesus' crucifixion to see how accurately Isaiah portrayed His suffering 700 years before it actually took place. However, perhaps more amazing than the fact that Jesus, God's own Son would undergo such suffering, is the meaning of that suffering.

THE SERVANT WOULD SUFFER ON OUR BEHALF

The mind boggling truth that Isaiah makes clear is that the Servant would suffer on our behalf, bearing our sin, taking our punishment. Isaiah made it clear we are sinful and guilty. He writes of how all of us like sheep have gone astray and turned to our own way and that we are all guilty of sin and iniquity (53:6). Jesus took our punishment upon Himself, enduring the wrath of God we deserved. He bore our griefs and sorrows. He was pierced for our iniquities. The Lord caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (53:6). Perhaps Isaiah sums it up best when he writes, "...He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due" (53:8). Jesus endured the stroke of punishment that we should have received.

Why was such suffering necessary? We must remember that God is infinitely holy and the perfectly just judge. As such, the breaking of His law and the violation of His holiness requires punishment. But God is also merciful, loving, and gracious. The suffering of His Son provided a way for both His justice and His mercy to be fulfilled.

THE SERVANT'S SUFFERING WOULD RESULT IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

We also see in this passage the wonderful results of the suffering of the servant. Our sins could be forgiven. Our judgment could be paid in full as He took it upon Himself. As he bore our griefs and sorrows and as He was pierced for our transgression and crushed for our iniquities, all those could be taken away. His death would be a guilt-offering on our behalf (53:10). Many will be justified (made right with God) (53:11).

Pastor John Piper sums up the message of Isaiah 53 well:

This is the heart of the gospel of Jesus—substitution. This is the great message of good news that God has for rebel subjects who are willing to lay down their rebellion. Instead of collapsing in grief over our rejection, he bears our griefs. Instead of increasing our sorrows, he carries our sorrows. Instead of avenging our transgressions, he is pierced for them in our place. Instead of crushing us for our iniquities, he is crushed for them as our substitute. And all the chastisement and whipping that belong to us for our rebellion he takes on himself in order that we might have peace and be healed.¹

CONCLUSION

We may see the importance of this passage in a New Testament account: in Acts 8:30-35:

³⁰Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. ³³"IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH." ³⁴The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

- **THIS MAN BELIEVED CHRIST AND WAS SAVED. HAVE YOU TRUSTED THE SUFFERING SERVANT AND THE WORK HE HAS DONE ON YOUR BEHALF?**
- **WE CAN REJOICE IN THE GREAT SUBSTITUTIONARY WORK OF CHRIST THAT TAKES AWAY OUR SIN AND CONDEMNATION.**
- **WE CAN BE STRENGTHENED IN OUR CONFIDENCE THAT THIS IS NO MYTH, BUT THE HISTORICAL WORK OF GOD WHO TOLD HIS STORY LONG BEFORE IT HAPPENED.**

¹ Piper, John. *Surely He Has Borne Our Griefs*. <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/surely-he-has-borne-our-griefs>