

TITLE: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

TEXT: ISAIAH 53

INTRO: If the Messiah hadn't come yet the first time, and today we were hearing of a person claiming to be Him, we would be able to study passages such as Isa 53 and compare them to this person to see if we had a match. Would you spend the time necessary in order to prove whether or not this person was He?

I. THE SERVANT'S BEGINNING & APPEARANCE (v. 1-2):

- A. (v. 1) Two questions: **1) Who has believed our report?** Who will believe what was said and written about the Messiah by Isaiah or the other prophets, or John the baptist, or Christ himself? Maybe many believed the prophecy (back then)! But this prophecy is intended to show the identity of Christ to those who would witness his actions. Who believed that Jesus was the Christ? Not many. **2) To whom is the arm (power) of the Lord revealed?** Who witnessed His miracles, yet didn't believe (***Jn 12:37-38**)?
- B. (v. 2) Description of his humble beginnings & appearance. *He grew up as a tender plant* (young twig – small, insignificant) before him (God, the Father). *As a root out of a dry ground* (like a shrub in the desert) – may refer to his coming out of Nazareth (**Jn 1:46** -Nathaniel-*“can anything good come out of Nazareth?”*). People usually follow the one who's good-looking or a good leader. This servant wouldn't display these characteristics. *He had no form (appearance) nor comeliness (beauty, glory); no beauty (appearance) that we should desire him.* There was nothing attractive about His beginnings (manger, the announcement to shepherds, gifts from Gentiles, escape to Egypt, etc.). Surely the Son of God won't come in this manner! If you had been living then, what would you have expected?
- C. Unlike books today with flowery, vivid character descriptions, the NT gives us no physical description of Jesus. There was nothing unusual about Jesus' appearance – nothing that would attract people to him or indicate that he was someone special.

II. THE SERVANT'S SUFFERING (v. 3-6):

- A. (v. 3) More specifically now, *he is despised & rejected of men*–“Crucify him!” The Jewish leaders (those that should've recognized Him), refused to acknowledge him. Even the crowd that followed him just wanted their bellies filled (**Jn 6:26**). Why reject him? He didn't live up to their expectations (not a physical king). He told them they needed to change. He rebuked them! *“A man of sorrows & acquainted with (to know) grief (sickness, disease)”* – what sickness? The ones he took from us (same word as in v. 4). This seems to indicate that, not only did he heal people, He, in some way, experienced those infirmities (physical and spiritual). *“We hid our faces from him...esteemed him not”* – People wagged their heads at him on the cross (Mk 15:29). On top of the physical & mental pain of the cross, He also had to deal with this form of humiliation & ridicule.
- B. (v. 4) *“He hath born our griefs & carried our sorrows”* – Jesus did this **1)** physically - through healing (***Mt 8:17**- quote from v.4), and **2)** spiritually – on the cross. *“Yet we did esteem him...smitten of God”* – They thought he was being punished for His own sins. But he was on that cross because of the sins of the world (**1 Pet 2:24; Heb 9:28**).
- C. (v. 5) Answer to the assumption of v. 4b – He was **not** on the cross for his own sin.
1. *“He was wounded (pierced) for our transgressions...bruised (beat or break to pieces) for our iniquities.”* This is why He came to earth. **Rom 4:25**-*“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”*
 2. *“The chastisement of (for) our peace was upon him”* – The punishment required for *our* sins was put on Him.
 3. *“With his stripes...”* – His scourging physically tore Him apart. The irony is that this healed us.
- D. (v. 6) Why did he have to go through this? Because *“all we like sheep have gone astray...turned to his own way”* – sheep wander from the shepherd, and the shepherd has to go through a lot of grief sometimes to get the sheep back. Every person has sinned (Rom 3:23), so Jesus, as a shepherd, offered himself for **all** (1 Tim 2:6). Those who will follow Him are *not* to turn away any more (**Jn 10:27**-*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”*).

III. THE SERVANT'S SUBMISSION (v. 7-9)

- A. (v. 7) *“...he opened not his mouth...like a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep...is silent.”* “He could've called 10,000 angels.” But *“when he was reviled, reviled not again”*-**1 Pet 2:23**. Fulfilled in not responding to false accusations. **Mt 26:63**-before high priest; **Mt 27:14**-before Pilate; **Lk 23:9**-before Herod. Quoted by Luke in **Ac 8:32-33** (Ethiopian eunuch was reading v. 7-8).
- B. (v. 8) **1)** His punishment, **2)** for our crime. *“He was taken from [by] prison [oppression] and judgment”* – by death (it was His death that took him from his oppression and judgment (false trials)). *“Who shall declare (or consider) his generation?”* We are told of his ancestors (**Mt 1; Lk 3**), but not of his descendants, *“because he was cut off (destroyed) from...living.”* But eventually (**v.10**), he *shall* see his seed (Christians). *“For the transgression of my people...”* –the real reason for his death.
- C. (v. 9) Though He had done no violence (sin-**1 Pet 2:22**), yet did he make his grave with the wicked (crucified w/thieves). But he was buried with the rich (new tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea-**Mt 27:57f**). Dishonorable death; honorable burial.

IV. THE SERVANT'S SUCCESS (v. 10-12):

- A. (v. 10) God did it, but for a purpose. When this is done, *“He shall see his seed...”* – His purpose is completed in the church (His seed is seen, His days prolonged, and the pleasure (desire, purpose) of God prospers (break out) in the church)!
- B. (v. 11) Continuing from v. 10, He shall see & be satisfied with the results of the sacrifice. *“By the knowledge of him...”* - **Acts 13:39**-*“By him, all that believe are justified.”* **Rom 10:17** –faith comes by hearing the word.
- C. (v. 12) Exaltation of Christ. The victor divides the spoil (**Mt 12:29**–Jesus spoils the strong man-Satan).

CONCLUSION: This is such a rich passage of prophecy about the one who came to earth, lived, suffered, & died in obedience to God, so that a predominantly disobedient & ungrateful world could have eternal life. It's no wonder the Ethiopian eunuch was good soil for conversion after reading this. If there is a key verse (thesis) of this chapter, it must be v. 5–*“he was wounded (pierced) for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...and with his stripes we are healed.”* He was wounded (fatally) so we could be healed (eternally). How? By obedience to his gospel call.