

Notes on Is. 52:13-53:12

Intro: The third servant song hinted that the Servant would suffer; but in this one, we learn not only why He would suffer but what would be achieved by His sufferings. Undoubtedly this prophecy can only find fulfillment in the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ!

The exaltation of the Servant--52:13-15

Interpretation of this first paragraph is difficult because of translation.

It concerns "My servant", this is the fourth servant passage (42; 49; 50; 53).

Isaiah begins the picture of the servant at the end! We see the servant in complete victory and thus authority.

High, lifted up, exalted

Here we need to define two words:

Astonished--from Hebrew "shamem" means to "to be astonished" at the desolation of another or to be desolated oneself. Cf. Is. 5:9; 13:9; 24:12; 33:8; 49:8, 19; 54:1,3; 59:16, 61:4; 63:5. The fact that Israel would be made desolate and many would be astonished is well established in Scripture.

Startled or sprinkled--from Hithapael form of "nazah" means to "spirt or sprinkle".

This is the common usage in the O.T. Delitch contends for the meaning "startle" based on the Arabic cognate which is used of the leaping up of persons.

Some difficulties: Is v. 14 addressed to the Servant or to Israel? Is it comparison or contrast? Is verses 14 parenthetical?

If the Servant, then there is an awkward change of person from the beginning to the end of the sentence. The sentence would read something like, "Just many were astonished at you in your desolation, Jesus (because of the severe humiliation you received), so too He (Christ) will sprinkle many nations and kings will shut their mouths because of Him". In this interpretation, v. 14 is parenthetical.

If Israel, then there is both comparison and contrast.

The thought is, "Just as many were astonished at you in your desolation...so he too will endure astonishing desolation, v. 14.

Just as many nations were astonished at you, so many nations will be sprinkled by his blood. Those highest among the nations, the kings, will shut their mouths because of him. For they will learn by means of the gospel what they would not have known otherwise and this will bring them into a state of respectful submission (Cf. Rom. 15:20-21).

Ironically, though believed on by the greatest in the Gentile world, the Messiah would be rejected among His own people!

The rejection of the Servant Isaiah--53:1-3

The fact of the Messiah's rejection, v. 1

Who has believed our report? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Both phrases convey the rejection of the testimony of those who revealed God's purposes. This includes both Jesus and His apostles who spoke for him (Cf. Jn. 12:37-41; Rom. 10:16-21)

The arm of the Lord refers to God in His saving power (Cf. Is. 51:9; 59:1)

The cause of the Messiah's rejection, v. 2

His unimpressive beginnings, as a tender shoot, like root out of dry ground
His unimpressive credentials as king, no form or majesty that we should look upon him or be attracted to him. Cf. 1 Sam. 10:23-24 Saul's appearance evoked ready reception of him as king of Israel. But Jesus used no such advantages.

The results of the Messiah's rejection, v. 3

Despised and forsaken

A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief

Not esteemed

The sufferings of the Servant--53:4-6

Undeserved, Mt. 8:16-17. Jesus' participation with men was in relieving their grief and sorrow. This includes not only his miraculous ministry but also his death.

Misinterpreted, v. 4 Though Jesus did good, yet those who saw him considered his crucifixion to be a judgment from God for wrong-doing.

Vicarious, v. 5-6 They were born for those who really deserved them! And even this was the Lord's doing! 1 Pet. 2:24-25

The submission of the Servant--53:7-9

To oppression and death

Silent before his accusers, Mt. 27:1-14; Lk. 23:9

Who considered?

His burial, v. 9a

Intended to be with the wicked in his death as a criminal

Yet, with a rich man, Mt. 27:57-60

None of it was deserved, 9b, Cf. 1 Pet. 2:22

Yet the Lord was pleased to put him to death!

The victory of the Servant--53:10-12

The conditions of victory, submission as a guilt offering, v 10

The means of victory, v. 10 resurrection

He would see his seed (Heb. 2:12)

He would prolong His days (Rev. 1:17-18)

God's pleasure would prosper in his hand (Rev. 19:16; Eph. 1:22-23)

The result of victory, v. 11-12

Justification of sinners

A portion among the great, dividing the booty with the strong