

ISAIAH 53 | *Suffering Servant*

Introduction

1. Importance.

- a. **1 Co 15:3-4** 3 For I [Paul] delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Messiah died for our sins *in accordance with the Scriptures*, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures....

2. Sublimity.

- a. This song is the crown jewel of Isaiah's theology, the focal point of his vision. The Servant is the key to it all.¹
- b. "How many are there whose eyes have been opened when reading this 'golden passion of the Old Testament evangelist,' as Polycarp the Lysian calls it! In how many an Israelite has it melted the crust of his heart! It looks as if it had been written beneath the cross upon Golgotha.... It is the unravelling of Ps. 22 and Ps. 110. It... is the most central, the deepest, and the loftiest thing that the Old Testament prophecy, outstripping itself, has ever achieved."²
- c. "Many, many facets of the Servant's character are revealed in this Song. He is sage, priest, sacrifice, servant, sufferer, conqueror and intercessor. He is the channel of God's mercy to sinners. In him the holiness and mercy of God are perfectly reconciled. He is the key to all God's plans for the people and for the world."³

3. Subject.

- a. Who is the Servant? Our two choices are Jesus or Israel.
- b. View of ancient Judaism.
 - (1) "[T]here are numerous example of the text being interpreted messianically in rabbinic literature—especially the exalted picture of 52:13...."⁴
 - (2) "The Messiah—what is his name? ... The Rabbis say, The Leper Scholar, as it is said, 'surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted....'"⁵
 - (3) "Another explanation [of Ruth ii.14]: —He is speaking of king Messiah; 'Come hither,' draw near to the throne; 'and eat of the bread,' that is, the bread of the kingdom; 'and dip thy morsel in the vinegar,' this refers to his chastisements, as it is said, 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.'"⁶
- c. View of modern Judaism.

¹ Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 209.

² Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 7:499-500.

³ Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 214.

⁴ Michael Brown, "Jewish Interpretations of Isaiah 53."

⁵ Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 98b.

⁶ *Midrash Ruth Rabbah*.

- (1) “Isaiah 53 is the central prophetic text in the debate concerning Jesus the Messiah. ...[T]he so-called ‘big three,’ Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Radak (writing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries) all interpreted Isaiah 53 with reference to the nation of Israel as a whole, or, more particularly, the righteous within the nation.”⁷
 - (2) The modern Jewish interpretation is that Israel bore the consequences of the sin of the Gentiles. In the song the Gentiles finally come to understand why Israel suffered and how righteous and beloved Israel is.⁸
- d. View of Jesus and the apostles.
- (1) Jesus interpreted this chapter as applying to himself.
 - (a) **Lk 22:37** 37 For I [Jesus] tell you [disciples] that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: And he was numbered with the transgressors [Is 53:12]. For what is written about me has its fulfillment.
 - (2) The early church was absolutely convinced Is 53 spoke of Jesus.
 - (a) **Ac 8:30-35** 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, Do you understand what you are reading? 31 And he said, How can I, unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.
 - 1) Notice the eunuch understood the servant to be an individual, not the nation of Israel.

4. Progressive Revelation.

- a. Substitutionary atonement was *not* a new idea to Israel, but the once-for-all substitution of one human being for sinful mankind arguably was a new idea.
- b. **Ge 3:15** 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.
- c. **Ge 3:21** 21 And Yahweh Elohim made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.
- d. **Ge 22:13-14** 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, Yahweh will provide. As it is said to this day, On the mount of Yahweh it shall be provided.
- e. It was enshrined in the Torah of Moses.
- f. Ps 22.
- g. **Is 1:18** 18 Come now, let us reason together, says Yahweh. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

⁷ Michael Brown, “Jewish Interpretations of Isaiah 53.”

⁸ Michael Brown, “Jewish Interpretations of Isaiah 53.”

- (1) Isaiah has announced forgiveness, but the basis on which it rests has not been clarified. Now at last it is.⁹
- h. Isaiah has already presented three Servant songs. This is the fourth.
- (1) **Is 42:1-4** 1 Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations. *2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.* He will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his Torah.
- (2) **Is 49:1-6** 1 Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. Yahweh called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. 2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword. In the shadow of his hand he hid me. He made me a polished arrow. In his quiver he hid me away. 3 And he said to me, You are my Servant, [the new] Israel, in whom I will be glorified. *4 But I said, I have laboured in vain. I have spent my strength for nothing and emptiness. Yet surely my right is with Yahweh, and my recompense with my God.* 5 And now Yahweh says, he who formed me from the womb to be his Servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of Yahweh, and my God has become my strength— 6 he says: It is too light a thing that you should be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel. *I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*
- (3) **Is 50:4-7** 4 The Lord Yahweh has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens. He awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. *5 Lord Yahweh has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. I turned not backward. 6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard. I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. 7 But Lord Yahweh helps me, therefore I have not been disgraced. Therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.*
- (4) Is 52:13-53:12 (see above).

5. Message.

- a. Five criteria are central to the idea of *vicarious suffering* in Isaiah 53:
- (1) One person intercedes for the sins of others.
 - (2) The one who intercedes for the sins of others is himself sinless and righteous.
 - (3) The vicarious act of the one occurs once for all.
 - (4) One intercedes for the sins of others of his own will.
 - (5) God brings about the vicarious action of the one intentionally.¹⁰

6. Structure.

- a. There are five stanzas.

⁹ Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 209.

¹⁰ Hermann Spieckermann, in Janowski and Stulmacher, *Suffering Servant*, 5-7.

- b. These stanzas may correspond to five offerings from the book of Leviticus: burnt offering (Is 52:13-15), meal offering (Is 53:1-3), peace offering (Is 53:4-6), sin offering (Is 53:7-9), and trespass offering (Is 53:10-12).¹¹

7. Apologetics.

- a. If one needs a reason to believe in the truth of Christianity, one need look no further.
- b. Isaiah's prophecy was delivered 700 years before its fulfilment.
- c. We know for sure Isaiah didn't write his prophecy after the fact because the Great Isaiah Scroll, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, dates from 125 years before Jesus was born.
(1) See: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>
- d. Here we are dealing with one of the greatest fulfilments of biblical prophecy.

¹¹ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 1983), 1:192.

Commentary

8. First Stanza: My Servant Shall Sprinkle Many Nations (Is 52:13-15).

- a. **Is 52:13-15** 13 Behold, my Servant [Messiah] will achieve success (שָׁכַל). He shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. 14 As many were astonished (שָׁמַם) at you (masc. sing.)— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of Adam (בְּנֵי אָדָם)— 15 so shall he sprinkle (נִזָּה) many nations (גוֹיִם רַבִּים). Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand (בִּינָה).
- b. Israel is again to behold Yahweh's servant, Messiah (v. 13a).
 - (1) **Is 42:1** 1 Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations.
 - (2) The first and last of Isaiah's Servant songs begin the same way.
- c. Yahweh's Servant will wisely achieve success (שָׁכַל) (v. 13b).
 - (1) He wisely knows exactly what to do to bring about God's intended result.
 - (2) **1 Sa 18:14-15** 14 And David had success (שָׁכַל) in all his undertakings, for Yahweh was with him. 15 And when Saul saw that [David] had great success (שָׁכַל), he stood in fearful awe of him.
- d. The result of his success is that he will be high, lifted up, and exalted (v. 13b).
 - (1) This corresponds to Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and exaltation to the Father's right hand.
 - (2) **Php 2:9-11** 9 Therefore God has highly exalted [Jesus] and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- e. Many shudder/are disgusted/experience revulsion/are astonished (שָׁמַם) at him because his appearance is so deformed/disfigured (מִזְשָׁחָה) (v. 14).
 - (1) Jesus will be so abused by the Jews and Romans, he will no longer look human.
- f. But in this way the Servant will sprinkle/spatter (נִזָּה) many nations (v. 15a).
 - (1) Sprinkling has to do with cleansing, with making a person or thing fit to be in the presence of God.¹²
 - (2) **Le 4:6** 6 ...And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before Yahweh in front of the veil of the sanctuary.
 - (3) **He 10:22** 22 ...Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts *sprinkled* clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
 - (4) The Servant is both the priest (52:15) and the sacrifice (53:10). This is the theme of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament.
- g. The reaction to his success will be kings (מְלָכִים) shutting their mouths in awe as they see and understand what they previously not known about (v. 15b).
 - (1) **Mk 15:39** 39 And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God!
 - (2) **Ro 15:20-21** 20 ...And thus I [Paul] make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Messiah has already been named, lest I build on someone else's

¹² Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 210.

foundation, 21 but as it is written, Those who have never been told of him [Jesus] will see, and those who have never heard will understand.

9. Second Stanza: Despised and Abandoned by Men (Is 53:1-3).

- a. **Is 53:1-3** 1 Who has believed (אמן) what he has heard from us [prophets]? And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed (גלה)? 2 For he [the Servant] grew up before him [Yahweh] like a young plant (יונק), and like a root (שֶׁרֶשׁ) out of dry ground. He had no form (תֵּאֲרָה) or splendour (הִדְרָה) that we should look at him, and no appearance (מְרֻאָה) that we should desire/take pleasure in/treasure (חמד) him. 3 He was despised (בוזה) and abandoned (הֶדְרַל) by men, a man of full of pain (אִישׁ מְכַאֲבוֹת) who knows sickness/suffering (חֲלִי). And as one from whom men veil their faces (מִסְתַּתֵּר) he was despised (בוזה), and we did not respect (חשב) him.
- b. The key question is: who will *believe* the report about the suffering Servant (v. 1a)?
- (1) “Us” (v. 1a) refers to Isaiah and other prophets and apostles who have been prophesying, or who will prophesy, about this Servant.
 - (a) **Ro 10:16-17** 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For *Isaiah* says, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us? 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the message of Messiah.
 - (2) With blind eyes and hardened heart, it is impossible for us to believe.
 - (a) **Jn 12:36-41** 36 When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from [the Jewish leaders]. 37 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, 38 so that the word spoken by *the prophet Isaiah* might be fulfilled: Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 39 Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, 40 He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them. 41 *Isaiah* said these things because he saw [Jesus’] glory and spoke of him.
 - (3) Every person must make a choice about the Servant Isaiah is describing. Do you have ears to hear?
- c. The action of Yahweh is *revealed* in what the Servant does (v. 1b)
- (1) Sadly, it is easy for man to badly miscalculate the importance of Jesus. In fact no one can believe without prior divine revelation. On the basis of human observation alone, there is no discernment as to who the Servant really is. “Nothing but divine revelation can make the Servant known to us and draw us to him.”¹³
- d. The Servant grows up before Yahweh like young plant or root out of dry ground (v. 2a).
- (1) Jesus came from a spiritually dry area, Galilee, where one would never expect the Messiah to come from.
- e. The Servant has no special appearance to attract our attention (v. 2b).
- (1) There was nothing distinctive about Jesus’ appearance at his first coming. He was the kind of individual people do not normally want to look at. He was not well-built, impressive, or handsome. He was ordinary and unattractive.
 - (2) **Mt 13:55** 55 Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas

¹³ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 427, 29.

- (3) **Php 2:7-8** 7 ...But emptied himself, by taking the form of a Servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form....
- f. He was despised, abandoned, and isolated by men (v. 3a).
- (1) **Mk 15:29-32** 29 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross! 31 So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another saying, He saved others. He cannot save himself. 32 Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe. Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.
- g. He was a man full of pains, well-acquainted with suffering/sickness (v. 3b).
- h. He was despised and considered unimportant (v. 3c).
- (1) **Jn 1:10-11** 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people [Israel] did not receive him.

10. Third Stanza: With His Wounds We Are Healed (Is 53:4-6).

- a. **Is 53:4-6** 4 Surely he has borne (נשא) our sickness/suffering (קָלִי) and carried (סבל) our pains/aches (מְכָאֵב). Yet we assumed/took him as (השֵׁב) afflicted (נגע), stricken (נכה) by God, and humiliated (ענה). 5 But he was wounded (חלל) for our crimes (פְּשָׁע). He was crushed (דכא) for our sin-guilt (עוֹן). Upon him was the discipline (מִסָּר) that brought us shalom (שְׁלוֹם), and with his wound/slash (חַבּוּרָה) we were healed (רפא). 6 All we like sheep have wandered astray (תעה). We have turned—every one—to his own way. But Yahweh has laid on him the sin-guilt (עוֹן) of us all.
- b. The Servant alone shoulders our suffering, sickness, and pain (v. 4a).
 - (1) **Mt 8:16-17** 16 That evening they brought to [Jesus] many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.
 - (2) Though Jesus does heal physical ailments today (though not all of them), his greater work is healing souls, giving salvation from sin.¹⁴
- c. We assumed he was afflicted, stricken by God, and humiliated (v. 4b).
- d. But he was:
 - (1) *Pierced* for our crimes (v. 5a).
 - (2) *Crushed/trampled to death* for our sin-guilt (v. 5b).
 - (a) This is describing *penal substitutionary atonement*. See *Atonement*.
 - (3) *Disciplined* to bring us peace/shalom (v. 5c).
 - (a) שְׁלוֹם means to be whole or complete. It's a rounded wholeness comprising personal fulfilment, harmonious society, and a secure relationship with God.¹⁵
 - (4) *Slashed* to bring us healing (v. 5d).
 - (a) The Servant deals with every aspect of our need, our sinful state, our alienation from God, and our broken personhood. It is healing in a total sense, restoring fulness and completeness.¹⁶
 - (b) **Is 30:26** 26 ...The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when Yahweh binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.
 - (c) **1 Pe 2:24** 24 [Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.
- e. Like sheep we all have wandered astray from God (v. 6a).
 - (1) **1 Pe 2:25** 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls [Jesus].
 - (2) “The essence of sin is going one’s own way, rather than God’s way.”¹⁷

¹⁴ John A. Martin, “[Isaiah](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1107.

¹⁵ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 430-31.

¹⁶ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 430-31.

¹⁷ John A. Martin, “[Isaiah](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1108.

- (3) We cannot blame a herd instinct for our rebellion against God. We are each individually responsible.¹⁸
- f. But Yahweh has laid on his Servant the sin-guilt of us all (v. 6b).
- (1) Again Isaiah includes himself.
- (2) **Col 2:13-14** 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with [Jesus], having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This [God] set aside, nailing it to the cross.
- (a) The cross was God's greatest triumph.
- (3) **He 10:4** 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
- (a) Only a human being can substitute for another human being.¹⁹
- (4) **He 10:14** 14 For by a single offering [Jesus] has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

¹⁸ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 431.

¹⁹ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 431.

11. Fourth Stanza: He Opened Not His Mouth (Is 53:7-9).

- a. **Is 53:7-9** 7 He was oppressed (שָׁנָה), and he was humiliated (עָנָה), yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter (טָבַח), and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression (עָצָר) and judgment (מִשְׁפָּט) he was taken away. And as for his contemporaries (דֹּר), who considered/pondered (שִׁחַ) that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the moral crimes (פְּשָׁע) of my people (עַם) [Israel]? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked (רָשָׁע) and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence (חָמָס), and there was no trickery/fraud (מְרִמָּה) in his mouth.
- b. Although the Servant was oppressed and humiliated, he did not open his mouth in protest (v. 7a).
 - (1) **Mt 26:62-63** 62 And the high priest stood up and said, Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? 63 But Jesus remained silent.
 - (2) **Mt 27:14** 14 But [Jesus] gave [Pilate] no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.
 - (3) **1 Pe 2:23** 23 When [Jesus] was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.
 - (4) Jesus quietly submitted to his death. He was clear-headed and conscience of what was happening, but he did not try to stop it
- c. He was completely silent, like a lamb led to slaughter or a sheep being shorn (v. 7b).
 - (1) **Ex 12:3-5** 3 Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ... 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats....
 - (2) **Jn 1:29** 29 The next day [John] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
- d. He was taken away to die by means of an oppressively brutal judicial process (v. 8a).
- e. None of his contemporaries mentally considered/mused/pondered that the Servant's life was being cut off for the moral crimes of Israel (v. 8b).
- f. They made his grave with wicked people (pl.) (v. 9a).
 - (1) **Mt 27:38** 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.
- g. He was with a rich man (sing.) in his death (v. 9b).
 - (1) **Mt 27:57-60** 57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 And Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.
- h. This was even though:
 - (1) He had done no violence or wrong (v. 9c).
 - (2) He had spoken no trickery or fraud (v. 9d)
 - (a) Jesus was outwardly and inwardly without sin (v. 9).

- (b) **He 4:15** 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one [Jesus] who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
- (c) **1 Jn 3:5** 5 You know that [Jesus] appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

12. Fifth Stanza: Many Accounted Righteous (Is 53:10-12).

- a. **Is 53:10-12** 10 Yet Yahweh desired to/took pleased in/delighted to (חפץ) crush (דכא) him. He has made him sick (חלה). When his soul (נַפְשׁוֹ) makes an atonement/compensation (אָפַן) for guilt, he shall see his descent (יָרַע). He shall prolong his days. The joy/delight/wish/matter/business (חֵפֶץ) of Yahweh shall succeed (צלח) in his hand. 11 Out of the anxious trouble (לְעַמְלָה) of his soul (נַפְשׁוֹ) he shall see and be satisfied (שָׂבַע). By his sweat (זְעֵמָה) shall the Righteous one, my Servant (עַבְדִּי), make many to be accounted righteous (צדק), and he shall carry (סבל) their sin-guilt (עוֹן). 12 Therefore I will divide him (חלק) a portion with the many (בְּרַבִּים), and he shall divide the booty/spoil/plundered goods (שָׁלַל) with the mighty (עֲצוּמִים), because he poured out (ערה) his soul (נַפְשׁוֹ) to death (מָוֶת) and was counted among (מנה) the criminals (פֶּשַׁע). Yet he bore/suffered (נשא) the sin-guilt (חַטָּא) of many and interceded (פגע) for the criminals (פֶּשַׁע).
- b. Yahweh desired/delighted to crush his Servant (v. 10a).
- c. Yahweh has made him sick (v. 10b).
- d. After the Servant's soul/life (נַפְשׁוֹ) makes atonement for guilt, he will see his descendants (v. 10c).
- (1) **Is 49:21** 21 Then you will say in your heart: Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone. From where have these come?
- (2) **Jn 1:12** 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God....
- e. Yahweh shall prolong the Servant's days (v. 10d).
- f. Yahweh's desire/delight will succeed through the wise Servant (v. 10e).
- g. As a result of the anxious trouble his soul experiences, the Servant will be satisfied with what he sees (v. 11a).
- (1) A Dead Sea Scroll says, "He shall see light." This is further proof resurrection is what Isaiah's has in mind here.
- (2) **He 12:2** 2 ...Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross....
- h. By his sweat (זְעֵמָה) the Righteous one, the Servant (עַבְדִּי) will provide righteous (צדק) for the many (v. 11b).
- (1) "The many" is a precise company, numerous but not all-inclusive.²⁰ The Servant's atonement is unlimited in its intention but limited in its application to those who believe.
- (2) **Ac 13:39** 39 ...And by [Jesus] everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Torah of Moses.
- (3) **Ro 3:21-25** 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Torah, although the Torah and the Prophets testify to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Messiah for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Messiah Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

²⁰ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 439.

- (4) **Ro 5:18-19** 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's [Adam's] disobedience *the many* were made sinners, so by the one man's [Jesus'] obedience *the many* will be made righteous.
- (5) **2 Co 5:21** 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- i. The Servant will shoulder the sin-guilt of many (v. 11c).
- (1) This verse is one of the fullest statements of atonement theology ever penned:
- The Servant knows the needs to be met and what must be done.
 - He is the Righteous one, fully acceptable to God.
 - He has been appointed by God to his task.
 - He is free from sin.
 - He identifies himself personally with our humanness and sin.
 - He is personally committed to his role as Servant.
 - He accomplishes his task fully.
- j. As a result, Yahweh will apportion to him the many and the strong (v. 12a).
- (1) *The many* may stand for believers while *the strong* may stand for unbelievers.²¹
- (2) **Ps 68:18** 18 You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious....
- k. The reason, again, is that the Servant:
- (1) Voluntarily poured out his life (שָׁפַךְ) to death (v. 12b).
- Mk 10:45** 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
 - Jn 10:18** 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.
- (2) Was counted among the criminals (v. 12c).
- l. In this way he:
- (1) Shouldered (שָׁבַע) the sin-guilt (אָפֶן) of many (v. 12d).
- (2) Interceded/interposed as a go-between (פָּגַע) for the criminals (פְּשָׁעִים) (v. 12e).
- Is 59:16** 16 He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no one to *intercede* (פָּגַע). Then his own arm brought him salvation (יִשׁוּעַ), and his righteousness (יְהִי־צְדָקָה) upheld him.
 - Ro 8:34** 34 Who is to condemn? Messiah Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is *interceding* for us.
 - 1 Ti 2:5-6** 5 For there is one God, and there is one *mediator* between God and men, the man Messiah Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.
 - He 7:25** 25 Consequently, [Jesus] is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, because he always lives to make *intercession* for them.
 - Jesus is not a barrier but a bridge to God.

²¹ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 443.

13. Recommended Reading.

- a. Bock, D. and M. Glaser, eds. *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*. Kregel, 2012
- b. Brown, Michael L. "Jewish Interpretations of Isaiah 53." Chosen People Productions, 2014.

14. Application.

- a. Consider (v. 8).
- b. Believe (v. 1).
- c. Tell (v. 1).
- d. Endure (1 Pe 2:20).

(1) **1 Pe 2:20-25** 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Messiah also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return, When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

15. Discussion Questions.

- a. Are you convinced Jesus is the Servant? Why or why not?
- b. For Jewish men and women who do not believe in Yeshua, why could Isaiah 53 be a game changer?
- c. Given what Jesus has done for us, how can you glorify him this week?