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Scripture Reading: Genesis 15:1-21

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Text: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

**Isaiah's Book of Consolation (Isaiah 40-55)**  
**(#21) "The Fourth Servant Song" (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)**

(The outline of Isaiah 40-55 is placed at the end of these notes.)

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We arrive today to one of the most content rich Old Testament prophecies of our Lord Jesus. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. God revealed through His prophet Isaiah the sufferings and death of His Servant, who through His death would redeem His people from their sin. This fourth song begins with verse 13 in Isaiah 52 and concludes with the last verse of chapter 53. Let us read this passage before us.

<sup>13</sup>Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;  
He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.

<sup>14</sup>Just as many were astonished at you,  
So His visage was marred more than any man,  
And His form more than the sons of men;

<sup>15</sup>So shall He sprinkle many nations.  
Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;  
For what had not been told them they shall see,  
And what they had not heard they shall consider.

<sup>1</sup>Who has believed our report?  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

<sup>2</sup>For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,  
And as a root out of dry ground.  
He has no form or comeliness;  
And when we see Him,  
There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

<sup>3</sup>He is despised and rejected by men,  
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.  
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

<sup>4</sup>Surely He has borne our grief's  
And carried our sorrows;  
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup>But He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed.

<sup>6</sup>All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,  
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
So He opened not His mouth.  
<sup>8</sup>He was taken from prison and from judgment,  
And who will declare His generation?  
For He was cut off from the land of the living;  
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.  
<sup>9</sup>And they made His grave with the wicked—  
But with the rich at His death,  
Because He had done no violence,  
Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

<sup>10</sup>Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;  
He has put Him to grief.  
When You make His soul an offering for sin,  
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,  
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.  
<sup>11</sup>He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.  
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,  
For He shall bear their iniquities.  
<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,  
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
Because He poured out His soul unto death,  
And He was numbered with the transgressors,  
And He bore the sin of many,  
And made intercession for the transgressors.

The death of our Lord Jesus is the climax of history, the extraordinary act of God in which He secured the redemption of His people. It is important that we are able to stand back and see the enormity of this event and its place in God's program. Before we begin to work through these verses, I would like us to consider something that I read recently that will help us to understand this event in the light of God's unfolding purpose in history. It speaks of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus intimated long before Isaiah's prophetic ministry, when God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15. These comments are on Genesis 15, in which we read of God coming to Abraham to make a covenant with him.

What an awesome God we have! What incredible love He had for His creatures!

Imagine! The Creator of the universe, the holy and righteous God, was willing to leave heaven and come down to a nomad's tent in the dusty, hot desert of Negev to express His love for His people.

"Bring Me a heifer, a goat, and a ram... along with a dove and a young pigeon," God told Abraham. Then, when those animals had been sacrificed and laid out on both sides of their shed blood, God made a covenant. To do that, he walked "barefoot," in the form of a blazing torch, through the path of blood between the animals.

Think of it. Almighty God walking barefoot through a pool of blood! The thought of a human being doing that is, to say the least, unpleasant. Yet, God, in all His power and majesty, expressed His love that personally. By participating in that traditional, Near Eastern covenant-making ceremony, He made it unavoidably clear to the people of that time, place and culture what He intended to do.

"I love you so much, Abraham", God was saying, "and I promise that this covenant will come true for you and your children. I will never break My covenant with you. I'm willing to put My own life on the line to make you understand."

Picturing God passing through that glory path between carcasses of animals, imagining blood splashing as He walked, helps us recognize the faithfulness of God's commitment. He was willing to

express, in terms His chosen people could understand, that He would never fail to do what He promised. And He ultimately fulfilled His promise by giving His own life, his own blood, on the cross.

Because we look at God's dealings with Abraham as some remote piece of history in a far-off land, we often fail to realize that we, too, are part of the long line of people with whom God made a covenant on that rocky plain near Hebron. And like those who came before us, we have broken that covenant.

When He walked in the dust of the desert and through the blood of the animals Abraham had slaughtered, God was making a promise to *all* the descendants of Abraham—to everyone in the household of faith. When God splashed through the blood, He did it for *us*.

We're not simply individuals in relationship to God, we're part of a long line of people marching back through history, from our famous Jewish ancestors David, Hezekiah, and Peter to the millions of unknown believers; from the ancient Israelites and the Jewish people of Jesus' day to the Christian community dating from the early church. We're part of a community of people with whom God established relationship in the dust and sands of Negev.

But there's more. When God made covenant with His people, He did something no human being would have even considered doing. In the usual blood covenant, each party was responsible for keeping only his side of the promise. When God made covenant with Abraham, however, He promised to keep both sides of the covenant.

"If this covenant is broken, Abraham, for whatever reason—for My unfaithfulness or yours—I will pay the price," said God. "If you or your descendants, for whom you are making this covenant, fail to keep it, I will pay the price in blood."

And at that moment, Almighty God pronounced the death sentence on His Son Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

As we have already considered three of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah's Book of Consolation, we have seen that the coming Servant is the faithful Son, the Israel of God (Isa. 49:7), who is set forth against the nation of Israel, the unfaithful son of God. The prophet revealed that the Servant of God would Himself be the basis of God's covenant with His people (Isa. 42:6). He would be the sacrifice by which God would atone for His people's sins. Here, in this Fourth Servant Song, we have portrayed our Lord Jesus in His sufferings on His the cross by which He would redeem His people from their sin. But it looks beyond our Lord's crucifixion to His resurrection and ascension to the throne of God, where He currently reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

As we look over our passage we see that not only is the gospel beautifully prophesied in these verses, but also the reaction and response to the gospel by both Israel and the Gentiles is foretold. The gospel is so clearly evident before our eyes in this passage that we might question how it is that Jesus Christ as the suffering Servant is not readily recognized by the Jewish people. As **Matthew Henry** wrote of this passage:

This prophecy, which begins here and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it, and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who hence preached Christ to the eunuch, has put it past dispute that of Him speaks the prophet this, of Him and of no other man (cf. Acts 8:34f). Here God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for His undertaking.<sup>2</sup>

Of course we know that the reason that the Jewish people fail to see Jesus in these verses is that only eyes which have been illumined by the Spirit of God can see clearly to understand even the most obvious of spiritual truths. When Peter confessed His recognition that Jesus was the promised Christ/Messiah, our Lord said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, *for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven*" (Matt. 16:17). Ultimately God must reveal Christ in the Scriptures to His people, in order for them to recognize Him and place their faith in Him.

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<sup>1</sup> These are the words of Ray Vander Loan with Judith Markam, *Echos of His Presence: Stories of the Messiah from the People of His Day* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1996), pp. 8-9. They were quoted in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant* (Crossway, 2012), pp. 257f.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Vol. 4, comments on Isaiah 52:12-53:12).

Matthew Henry alluded to the Ethiopian eunuch who had this very passage of Isaiah open before him and he was reading it aloud, when Philip approached his chariot. Philip asked the eunuch, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” The carnal mind discerns not spiritual things; its eye is darkened; its ear is heavy. Inspiration (the Bible) itself cannot put a spiritual truth so clearly that men will see it, unless their eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit. Worthless is the brightest light to blind men. But remember what was true of the Jews is equally true of the Gentiles. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the simplest thing in the world, but fallen, sinful man does not understand it until he is taught of God. As **Charles Spurgeon** once wrote:

There are preachers who labor after simple words, and seek out instructive similitudes, by which to make the gospel clear to every apprehension; but yet of the unregenerate it may be said, “their foolish heart is darkened.” Sin has brought upon the human race a mental incapacity with regard to spiritual subjects. They rush into darkness, though the gospel creates a noonday around them; they grope for the wall like the blind, though the Sun of righteousness shines with infinite brightness. Alas! To what has our nature fallen! How is the image of God marred within us! How ardently we should adore the Holy Spirit, that He stoops to us even in this our blindness, and is pleased to remove the scales and pour light into our souls. Whatever we may have rightly discerned has been revealed to us by His teaching, for apart from His illumination we should have been obstinately unbelieving as the Jews, who knew not their King.<sup>3</sup>

And so, because we are fallen in our sin, we are blind to the Scriptures as to their understanding. But we are blind also to our own true condition and need of healing. Sin has dimmed our eyes, hardened our hearts, uncrowned our heads, weakened our strength, filled us with putrefying sores, and left us naked in our shame so as to leave us in a state of total helplessness and hopelessness unless and until God takes action on our behalf. And we cannot even recognize the antidote to our affliction, even when it is held directly before our eyes. He must take the healing Word and apply it to every individual case.

As we look over the Fourth Servant Song we may glean the following outline:

- I. The Servant is greatly exalted after being deeply humiliated (52:13-15)
- II. The Servant is rejected because of His seeming insignificance (53:1-3)
- III. The Servant’s willingness to suffer death for His guilty people (53:4-6)
- IV. The Servant’s submission to suffering unto death (53:7-9)
- V. The outcome of the Servant’s suffering unto death (53:10-12)

Let us begin to work through our passage.

### **I. The Servant is greatly exalted after being deeply humiliated (52:13-15)**

These verses, 52:13-15, may be seen as containing the message of all of chapter 53 in capsulated form, but in reverse order. In chapter 53 the suffering of the Servant is set forth first, which then secondly results in His exaltation. But in these first few verses of the song the Servant’s exaltation is presented first, and then secondly the path unto His exaltation, which is His sufferings.

The song opens with God speaking about His Servant. He is asserting at the outset that contrary to all appearances, His Servant would be exalted to a position of kingly authority. The path to His exaltation would be that of intense suffering resulting in death. Nevertheless He would come forth triumphantly unto His inauguration as the King over the Kingdom of God. **Verse 13** reads:

<sup>13</sup>***Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;  
He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.***

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pilgrim Publications), vol. 18, pp. 565f.

Again, God is speaking. Although appearances seem contrary, His Servant will accomplish what He set out to do; He will redeem His people. He will be exalted. The NKJV translation that we have before us speaks of how the Servant would deal “prudently.” We could perhaps better understand what is expressed by the ESV that reads, “Behold, my servant shall act wisely.” But the idea being conveyed is the result of His acting wisely, namely, because His Servant would act wisely as the Servant of the Lord, fulfilling His duty and role as God’s Servant, God would cause Him to be exalted as His King.

The degree of His exaltation is set forth in three verbs. He shall *be exalted and extolled and be very high*.

So God grades the work of His Son. Success of every sort and description shall be rightly attributed to the Servant. He did His work very well.<sup>4</sup>

This exaltation of the Servant is to His throne over the Kingdom of God. In other words, The Servant of the Lord, that is, Jesus Christ, is foretold here to become King of kings and Lord of lords. It foretells our Lord’s resurrection from the terrible suffering that He would encounter resulting in His death. But it speaks of the result of His resurrection, even His ascension from the grave into heaven, where God the Father enthroned Him over His kingdom. Christ Jesus has been declared to be both Lord and Christ by the resurrection from the dead (cf. Acts 2:36; Rom. 1:4). And it is through His kingly power that He brings the benefits of His death to His people. He is King now, and that we are saved from our sin today is due to His kingly power. Here is a good statement on our Lord’s Kingly office; it is from **The First London Confession of Faith**, Article XIX:

Concerning His kingly office, Christ being risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and having all power in heaven and earth, He doth spiritually govern His church, and doth exercise His power over all, angels and men, good and bad, to the preservation and salvation of the elect, and to the overruling and destruction of His enemies. By this kingly power He applieth the benefits, virtue, and fruits of His prophecy and priesthood to His elect, subduing their sins, preserving and strengthening them in all their conflicts against Satan, the world, and the flesh, keeping their hearts in faith and filial fear by His Spirit: By this His mighty power He ruleth the vessels of wrath, using, limiting and restraining them, as it seems good to His infinite wisdom.<sup>5</sup>

We next read what preceded His exaltation, which was His suffering. **Verse 14** reads:

*<sup>14</sup>Just as many were astonished at you,  
So His visage was marred more than any man,  
And His form more than the sons of men;*

The prophet had earlier described Israel’s humiliation under the judgment of God as having been so severe that it *astonished* the nations who witnessed their judgment (cf. Isa. 29:9). In the same way, when the Servant of the Lord suffered on His cross, the reaction of those who witness Him in His suffering would be astonishment. The degree of the suffering of the Servant bordered on the unthinkable. Those who would witness His suffering would stand by stupefied, overpowered by the paralyzing amazement of His wretched condition. His appearance “turned away the faces of hardened men, men accustomed to viewing and inflicting great torments”, as one described it. His disfigurement was to such a degree that it resulted in Him to appear no longer human.

But the astonishment of those who witness His suffering is not outdone by the astonishment of those who witness His exaltation. **Verse 15** reads:

*<sup>15</sup>So shall He sprinkle many nations.*

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<sup>4</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, vol II, Chapters 40-66 (Baker Book House, 1971), p. 225.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 15:4; 1 Pet. 3:21,22; Matt. 28:18,19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:1, 5:30,31; John 19:36; Rom. 14:9; John 5:26,27; Rom. 5:6,7,8; 14:17; Gal. 5:22,23; Mark 1:27; Heb. 1:14; John 16:15; Job 2:8; Rom. 1:21, [9:17-18]; Eph. 4:17,18; 2 Pet. 2.

***Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;  
For what had not been told them they shall see,  
And what they had not heard they shall consider.***

And so, to the same degree that they were astonished at His humiliation, they will be astonished at His exaltation. "Never was a man brought so low, never was anyone raised so high" (Leopold). Though He would suffer and die, He would come forth triumphantly from the dead to rule over all the world. His exaltation is seen in that He "sprinkles" many nations. This speaks of cleansing from sin. Just as when a priest would ceremonially cleanse a former leper, restoring him to the privilege of access to worship God with the people of God in the temple of God, so this Servant would cleanse even the Gentile nations, rendering them "clean" before God, made fit to approach and commune with a holy God, their God.

These Gentiles who had not the truth proclaimed to them, as had the Jewish people, who had not the advantage of possessing the oracles of God, see this sight of the Suffering Servant and are rendered clean by it. It was through His suffering that His position of authority was granted Him by God so as to effect the benefits of His death among the Gentile nations of the world.

This work of bringing Gentiles to become "clean" before God is what our Lord Jesus has been doing throughout this church age. The gospel of Jesus Christ has gone into the Gentile world and those who come to faith in Him, having formerly been "unclean", unable to be in the presence of God in the Kingdom of God, are rendered "clean", suitable for citizenship and participation in the Kingdom of God.

We now come to Isaiah 53:1ff, in which we read in greater detail the nature and degree of His sufferings that resulted in His exaltation.

## **II. The Servant is rejected because of His seeming insignificance (53:1-3)**

***<sup>1</sup>Who has believed our report?  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?***

The prophet calls out to God regarding the unresponsiveness of Israel to his message of the suffering Servant. As a whole they did not recognize or acknowledge Him. We read of this in **John 12:37-41**, in which John quoted this first verse of Isaiah 53.

But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, <sup>38</sup>that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "***Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?***" <sup>39</sup>Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

<sup>40</sup>"He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,  
Lest they should see with their eyes,  
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,  
So that I should heal them."

<sup>41</sup>These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

And so, the Gentiles accept in faith, what had been unheard by them or sought by them, but ethnic Israel (except for a remnant) had put no faith in a message which that they had heard for centuries--that of the Servant of God who came from a lowly beginning to a glorious end.

We read of our Lord's upbringing in **verse 2**:

***<sup>2</sup>For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,  
And as a root out of dry ground.  
He has no form or comeliness;  
And when we see Him,***

***There is no beauty that we should desire Him.***

At first, the Servant appeared imperceptibly and unrecognized by those about Him. The reference to Him as a “tender shoot” speaks of His Davidic lineage. He was descended from King David, and was therefore an heir to David’s throne, to rule on behalf of God over the Kingdom of God. A “tender shoot” is a sucker springing from the root at ground level. Again, this speaks of his Davidic lineage, heir to the throne (Isa. 11:1). “Dry ground” speaks of the barren, desolate condition of Israel when the Servant appeared on the scene. But this Son of David would arise under the watchful care, protection, and governance of God (the Father): “*For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant.*”

However, though God is watching over His Servant as He grows to manhood, He is rejected by His people. There was nothing impressive about this one, humanly speaking, that would result in people looking to Him as One who would lead them. Apparently our Lord Jesus was an ordinary man in appearance, who did not outwardly impress people with His appearance or His personality. He was unassuming. He was not ambitious for Himself. He was a faithful, dutiful Servant unto His God.

**Verse 3** records that He was not only One who did not attract attention or recognition, but when the time came for Him to perform His great work of redemption on behalf of His people, they rejected Him.

***<sup>3</sup>He is despised and rejected by men,  
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.  
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.***

Now this probably speaks of His rejection of the crowds who desired that Pilate crucify Him as well as the people’s rejection of Him as He hung upon His cross. Nothing about Him as He hung upon His cross would inspire a following; just the opposite. But this verse may also speak about Him as a person throughout His life. He did not use human personality or fleshly means to gather a following.

He was “despised” rather than “loved.”

He was “rejected” rather than “embraced.”

He was “forsaken” rather than “defended”; “we hid as it were our faces from Him.”

He was viewed as a source of shame rather than an object of worship, for we “esteemed him not.”

The life of our Lord Jesus while He was here on earth must have been a very difficult, sorrowful experience for Him. Yes, He would be One who was at peace in Himself and would enjoy His fellowship with His Father, commune with Him in His day-to-day walk. He no doubt rejoiced and seeing the creation all about Him all the days of His life. But His involvement and interaction with fallen mankind must have been a cause of great sorrow to Him. If fallen, but “righteous”, Lot had his soul vexed day after day due to the sin that he witnessed in the city of Sodom, how must it have been for the One who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners!” to move about this fallen world of sinners.

### **III. The Servant’s willingness to suffer death for His guilty people (53:4-6)**

***<sup>4</sup>Surely He has borne our grief’s  
And carried our sorrows;  
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten by God, and afflicted.***

Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for others, but at the time He was crucified, He was perceived as having been rejected by God. The Scriptures teach that “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” That is how they regarded Him when they saw Him crucified.

But then the true state of His condition is stated. He was not accursed of God. He was not smitten for His transgressions; rather, He was wounded for “our transgressions” said the prophet. He did not suffer or die because of any reason in Him, but He suffered and died on behalf of His people, in order to satisfy the justice of God on their behalf.

He (Isaiah) shows how great was the ingratitude and wickedness of the people, who did not know why Christ was so severely afflicted, but imagined that God smote him on account of his own sins, though they knew that he was perfectly innocent, and his innocence was attested even by his judge. (Matthew 27:24; Luke 23:4, 14, 22; John 18:38) Since therefore they know that an innocent man is punished for sins which he did not commit, why do they not think that it indicated some extraordinary excellence to exist in him? But because they see him wounded and despised, they do not inquire about the cause, and from the event alone, as fools are wont to do, they pronounce judgment. Accordingly, Isaiah complains of the wicked judgment of men, in not considering the cause of Christ’s heavy afflictions; and especially he deplores the dullness of his own nation, because they thought that God was a deadly enemy of Christ, and took no account of their own sins, which were to be expiated in this manner.<sup>6</sup>

We read in **verse 5**:

***<sup>5</sup>But He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed.***

It was our sins that crucified our Savior. When our Lord came to be so identified with us, His people, so as to bear our sin, God struck Him severely. The blows that the Roman soldiers heaped upon our Lord’s sinless body were the bruises that our “iniquities” had afflicted upon Him. But in His suffering, bearing our guilt, our reproach, He secured peace between God and ourselves. The lashes of the whip on His back brought to us healing of all of our sin and its effects.<sup>7</sup>

***<sup>6</sup>All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.***

The metaphor is that of a flock of sheep over which the Lord is our Shepherd. We are prone to stray, wonder in our lost condition. Sin by definition is having “turned, every one, to his own way.” But the Lord goes forth to seek His sheep and when He finds him, as the Good Shepherd He places His sheep upon His shoulders and carries them back to His fold. Here the analogy of the Shepherd bearing His sheep is our Lord, bearing our iniquities.

By the way, again, it says, “*We have turned, every one, to his own way.*” We all go stray, but we may wander off in different directions to different degrees. But there is a peculiar sinfulness about each of us as individuals. All are sinful, but each has “some special aggravation not found in his fellow” (Spurgeon). I am sinful, as everyone else here is sinful. But in some ways I am probably more uniquely sinful to you, and probably you with respect to me. There is unanimity of opinion among sinners awakened to their wretchedness. Each of us could challenge rather vociferously Paul’s claim to being the chief of sinners.

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<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 3, p. 115.

<sup>7</sup> The clause, “And by His strips we are healed”, is commonly cited by those who promote the teaching that physical healing was secured to all of God’s people through Christ’s atonement and may be appropriated in every instance of sickness through faith in God who heals. Now certainly all of the healings we receive in this life and our perfect state of health in the life to come is due to Christ’s death, but it is wrong to presume or assume that physical healing is the privilege and present benefit for all of God’s people, if they simply have faith. The people of God are still subject to sickness in this life, though thankfully God at times is merciful and gracious to answer prayer in granting healing from our diseases, and at times in a miraculous manner.

#### IV. The Servant's submission to suffering unto death (53:7-9)

- (1) Verse 7 describes the patience and humble submission of the Servant to His suffering.
- (2) Verse 8 describes his departure from this life.
- (3) Verse 9 describes his burial.

*<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He opened not His mouth;  
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,  
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
So He opened not His mouth.*

The imagery of a sheep is taken up again by the prophet. It was used in a negative sense of the remnant of Israel in verse 6; like sheep people tend to stray. Here, however, it is used in a positive sense to describe the submission of the Servant to his suffering. Our Lord is both the Shepherd over us, even as He was also as a lamb for us. As a sheep submits to being sheared and is even silent when about to be slaughtered, so was Christ.

The unique degree of suffering that the Servant endured is a matter of constant wonderment for the prophet. Equally striking is the fact that all the suffering was borne without a word of protest or complaint. This latter fact is an indication that the Servant endured willingly whatever was laid upon Him. Had He suffered under protest and reluctantly, His suffering would have been impaired as to its effectiveness. In this respect the Servant stands in sharp contrast to men of the Old Testament who had a large measure of suffering to endure, like Job and Jeremiah. They were very vocal in their cry of anguish and in their protestations of innocence. So the comparison with a sheep, or a sheep-mother (a "ewe") is very much in place. The last line of the verse is not an idle repetition, or a clumsy copyist's mistake. It stresses an important point that should stand out. Here also lies the basis for the very choice name that John the Baptist used for Jesus, "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29. 36).<sup>8</sup>

We then read **verse 8**:

*<sup>8</sup>He was taken from prison and from judgment,  
And who will declare His generation?  
For He was cut off from the land of the living;  
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.*

No one recognized that it was because He was a substitute for sinners that He died. It was not until after the resurrection, through the instruction of the living Lord and through the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost that even His disciples began to comprehend the substitutionary nature of His death.

Note that the prophet is speaking of the servant's death on behalf of "my people." Take note that limited atonement, or particular redemption, is taught here. The Promised Messiah did not come attempting to pay for the sin of all the human race, but rather He came as a substitute, a sin-bearer on behalf of His people. We read in verse 8 that Christ was to die on behalf of His people, or "My people", that is, those who belong to God in the covenant that the Servant of God enacted on behalf of His people.

Now Christ was a Jewish Messiah, who came as a fulfilment of Jewish sacrifices, as an atonement for Israel having transgressed the covenant given through Moses. The mystery that was hidden from them was that the benefit of his death would come upon the Gentiles as well. Two reasons why God could do this for the Gentiles:

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<sup>8</sup> Leupold, p. 229f.

(1) That Jews were condemned as sinners making them no more deserving of blessing than Gentiles, it enabled God to be just in showing mercy to all whether they be Jewish or Gentile (Romans 3);

(2) Because Abraham received the blessing of salvation through a faith he had prior to being circumcised, God could justify the uncircumcised Gentiles who had the same kind of faith as their father Abraham (Romans 4).

We next read **verse 9**:

***<sup>9</sup>And they made His grave with the wicked—  
But with the rich at His death,  
Because He had done no violence,  
Nor was any deceit in His mouth.***

This is one of the most convincing prophecies of Scripture with regard to Jesus' sufferings and death. How could he be both identified with wicked men and a rich man in his death; answer: he died between two thieves but was buried by the rich man, Joseph of Arimaethea, in a sepulchre that he had prepared for himself.

#### **V. The outcome of the Servant's suffering unto death (53:10-12)**

***<sup>10</sup>Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;  
He has put Him to grief.  
When You make His soul an offering for sin,  
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,  
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.***

Now, God is the ultimate cause of all things. Evil men do wicked things and will be held accountable one day before the Judge of all the earth; but God uses even wicked men's deeds to accomplish His purposes. It was God who crushed the Servant; it was the judgment of God that fell upon Him. We read in Acts 4:

The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.<sup>27</sup> "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together<sup>28</sup> "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. (Acts 4:26-28)

The Servant of the Lord is seen as an offering for sin on behalf of His people. The offering was made under the Old Testament economy in such a way as to picture the expiation (removal) of sin, both its guilt and punishment, from the sinner to the sacrifice.<sup>9</sup> And so Paul also describes Christ in these terms in the New Testament.<sup>10</sup>

But we read further in verse 10 that "He shall see His seed" that is, His offspring. After He is made an offering for sin He will see His descendants? How is this possible? Answer: The Servant will be resurrected; death will not hold Him. Through His death, Christ assured Himself a posterity, a people of His own to whom He is a Father.

<sup>10</sup>For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup>For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup>saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." <sup>13</sup>And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "**Here am I and the children whom**

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Exodus 29:14f.

<sup>10</sup> Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3f)

**God has given Me.”** <sup>14</sup>Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup>and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. <sup>16</sup>For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Heb. 2:10-18)

We entered this world as descendants of the first Adam through a natural birth; we gain entrance to the world to come as descendants of the second Adam through a second, a supernatural birth. We have His life in us; as the parent’s life is in the child. “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” “We have our natural life, this makes us men: we have our spiritual life, this makes us Christians.”

Here the prophet speaks of the Servant’s reign as King. The will of God is conducted/carried out through “His hand” or through Him. The Lord entrusts His concerns to the faithful Servant who died on behalf of His people. He who purchased them is their rightful leader who will continue to mediate the blessings of God to His people.

***<sup>11</sup>He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied,  
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,  
For He shall bear their iniquities.***

This should be a cause of great comfort and joy for the Christian; as Christ had first to view the terrible prospect of a violent painful death, and even the more terrible prospect, becoming regarded as “sin”, He was strengthened and is now satisfied with this prospect, by it He secured your salvation, if you believe on Him. The salvation of your soul and the fact that you would be with Him brings satisfaction to the heart of our Lord.

Now hear again, we have the redemption accomplished by the work of Christ being for a specific, finite number of people. When the high priest under the Old Testament system placed his hand upon the sacrificial goat on the Day of Atonement, the sins of the people of Israel were transferred to that sacrifice. The Day of Atonement did not provide a sacrifice for the Canaanite, Babylonian or the Egyptian; but for Israel only. Now the sacrifice could be reckoned as having atoning benefit for a Canaanite, Babylonian, or the Egyptian, if he would come and become a proselyte, joining himself to the people of Israel.

In the same way, Jesus Christ sought to “justify the many.” He bore the iniquities of His people. Thankfully, His people has been broadened to include multitudes from every nation on the earth. But be assured of this, if one would have his/her sins pardoned, if the atonement of Christ is to be rendered effectual, one must become numbered among His people. Those who are outside this group will have to bear the full penalty of their own sin on the Day of Judgment. Christ’s atoning death was sufficient for all, but intended and rendered effectual for His people.

***<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,  
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
Because He poured out His soul unto death,  
And He was numbered with the transgressors,  
And He bore the sin of many,  
And made intercession for the transgressors.***

Yet He Himself bore the sins of many, and He interceded for the transgressors. The image is that of a conquering warrior, the battle having ended, He now sits down to distribute the spoils.

“He was numbered with the transgressors” was quoted by Mark as having been fulfilled when Jesus hung between two thieves (Mk. 15:28).

The clause, “And interceded for the transgressors”, is perhaps prophetic of the statement on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Or, it may be prophetic of His high priestly ministry;

after having offered Himself as a sacrifice, He entered the presence of God in order to render the benefits of His sacrifice on behalf of His people. (cf. John 17:9, 20).

May God be praised for His unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ!

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Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
To God our Savior,  
Who alone is wise,  
Be glory and majesty,  
Dominion and power,  
Both now and forever. Amen. (Jud 24f)

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Outline of Isaiah 40-66  
SECTION THREE: ORACLES OF REDEMPTION AND CONSUMMATION

I. The Book of the Consolation of Israel (Chs. 40-55)

- A. The Prophet is to Announce God's Coming (40:1-11)
- B. The Creator of the Universe (40:12-31)
- C. God Promises to Deliver His People from Babylon (41:1-29)
- D. The First Servant Song (42:1-9)
- E. Sing to the Lord a New Song (42:10-13)
- F. God declares His resolve to battle on behalf of His people (42:14-17)
- G. Israel, the Blind and Deaf Servant of God (42:18-25)
- H. God's Commitment to Save His People by His Grace (43:1-7)
- I. The Servant Israel is the Lord's Witness (43:8-13)
- J. The Redemption and Restoration of Israel from Babylon (43:14-44:8)
- K. Satire against Idolatry (44:9-20)
- L. Israel is Forgiven and Redeemed (44:21-23)
- M. God Commissions the Persian Emperor Cyrus to Deliver His People (44:24-45:13)
- N. The Conversion of the Nations (45:14-25)
- O. Worthless Idols vs. the Living God (46:1-13)
- P. The Defeat and Humiliation of Babylon Predicted (47:1-15)
- Q. Israel Refined and Redeemed (48:1-22)
- R. The Second Servant Song (49:1-13)
- S. God's Restoration of "Zion"--His People—Who are Redeemed by His Servant (49:14-26)
- T. God Assures His People that He will Save Them unto Himself (49:14-26)
- U. The Third Servant Song (50:1-11)
- V. The Lord Comforts Zion (51:1-52:12)
- W. The Fourth Servant Song (52:13-53:12)