

Isaiah 53

THE SUFFERING SERVANT SONG

The Gospel in Prophecy 700 + Years BC

Is composed of 15 Verses that may be divided into 5 Topical Stanzas of 3 verses each beginning with Isaiah 52:13 through Isaiah 53:12

The poetry of the Hebrew Bible is read in melody or sung.

This prophecy is sym-me'tri-cal. There are five stanzas of three verses each. It begins and ends with the Servant's exaltation first and fifth stanzas and set within this is the story of Christ's rejection in stanzas two and four, which in turn frame the centerpiece stanza 3, Isaiah 53:4-6, where the atoning significance is revealed. God and man, reconciled, share in the telling the story of the good news. Note the "my" and "our" of the outer stanzas of: one and five.

The First Stanza Isaiah 52:13, 14 & 15

Isaiah 52:13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

This First Stanza of is like a motion picture preview or trailer today. These verses mention the great themes of the Gospel in the reverse order of their treatment in the following chapter.

Here exaltation the ending, is previewed, followed by suffering; and in Isaiah 53rd chapter the suffering is followed by His exaltation.

"Behold my Servant ..." Here the New Israel, Jesus Christ Himself shall be raised to a position so glorious that many were appalled at his pitiful sight ... so nations shall do Him homage and kings shall be reverently silent in His presence, beholding the wonderful, victorious and exalted Saviour.

Philippians 2:6-8 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery (something to be grasped) to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was

made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

**“Very high” the word in Hebrew means: Lift up, raise up or rear up:
John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:**

John 8:28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things

John 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Instead of just viewing these passages as an account of Jesus' sufferings, we should rather see the picture of His Marvelous Victory and Exaltation through Suffering to God's own right hand.

“exalted and extolled, and be very high ...”

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of [his] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Psalm 89:27 Also I will make him [my] firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

By means of His terrible sufferings, Christ attained to His glorious victory and exaltation to His position at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

As the Hebrew writer says: Though He were a son yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered Hebrews 5:8-9

Right here is the reason that we know that these songs of the Servant were not produced by the Hebrew people or any second Isaiah, but they are given by Almighty God through Isaiah. The concept of a suffering, humiliated, chastised, rejected, crucified Saviour was contrary to absolutely everything that the Jews desired; and when the Christ came, it was His faithful adherence to the plan of the ages laid down here that caused their rejection and their clamoring for his death.

The genuineness of this passage is certain; because the Jews would not have forged it, since it is opposed to their dream of a Davidic Messiah; and the Christians could not have forged it, because the prophecy of Isaiah that contains it has never been in the custody of Christians. The Jews, enemies of Christianity, were "our librarians," it was the Jews who gave it to us, as stated by the apostle cf:

Romans 3:1-2 What advantage then hath the Jew? ... V:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Philippians 2:9-11 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth; 11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father

Isaiah 52:14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

"His visage was so marred, more than any man..." The suffering Servant, the coming Messiah, is to be beaten and marred more than any man. Most people today have a very poor, at best, understanding of the suffering of Christ. Read the accounts found near the end of the four Gospels and try to understand what abuse Christ suffered for us.

A Roman flagon was a cat of 3 tails; each tail was reinforced with bits of metal which tore the skin & flesh. 39 lashes with a whip was allowed under the law, times 3 tails, which would mean that Jesus had 117 cuts on His back ... many people died during scourging.

Isaiah 52:15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for [that] which had not been told them shall they see; and [that] which they had not heard shall they consider.

Hebrews 9:13-14 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

I Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

These are twin references to faith in Christ through our knowledge of Christ's sufferings, our deep heart felt repentance and Christian baptism which constitutes the ceremonial gateway into the Christian religion. We are "baptized into Christ." Galatians 3:17

"kings shall shut their mouths at him" This means that, "Men, even kings, will learn of Christ's humiliation, sufferings, death, burial resurrection, and ascension to heaven. Facts of which had never entered into the hearts or imaginations of men, and no tongue had ever spoken.

The significance of Blood & Oil:

"So shall He (the Messiah) sprinkle..." The unusual Hebrew *naw-zaw'*, To besprinkle, especially in cleansing of sin. This word is used only to describe the priests work of sprinkling blood (Exodus 29:21- Aaron himself), the household of Aaron, the priest, (Leviticus 4:6,17;5:9;

14:7,51; 16:14-15 and 16:19), and the anointing of the cleansed by the blood, with oil: (Leviticus 14:16 & 27). It is also interesting to note that Christ, our great high Priest, "by his own blood entered into the holy place" and now when we are baptized (not sprinkled) into His death (Romans 6:3-6) we come into contact with His blood and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). Figurative: The Oil- Luke 4:18; Hebrews 1:9 & Acts 10:38 Christians Anointed w/ Holy Ghost & at baptism receive the Spirit II Cor. 1:21-22.

"... sprinkle many nations ..." a reference to the incredible success of Christ establishing His kingdom the Church; and the homage of kings, and the great men of the earth to His teachings, all are His subjects. Who will the Messiah cleanse by the sprinkling of His blood?

"sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him:" Mark 16:15-16 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Paul made this verse 52:15 the focal point of his ministry and considered it his mandate to go preach where no man had gone before. An example is I Corinthians 3 where he discusses not building on any other man's foundation ... Apollos built upon his foundation when he preached in Corinth. Paul quotes this verse from Isaiah 52:15

Romans 15:20-21 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: 21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand (52:15)

The Second Stanza: Isaiah 53:1-3

Isaiah Chapter 53. Throughout this chapter the Hebrew word *Hoo* is used to describe the Messiah - the Suffering Servant. *Hoo* is a third person personal pronoun, singular, and it is translated properly into

English as: “He” 18 times, “Him” 10 times or “His” 13 times.= 41 times. Furthermore the He is contrasted with the “people” in verse 8 ... therefore it cannot be the Jews who suffer and atone for themselves - this is a single person: the coming Messiah Jesus Christ.

Note the Future Perfect tense of the verbs throughout this chapter. By the Holy Spirit the prophet is so certain that these things are going to happen, he writes them as if they have already happened in the past ... the lamb slain from the foundation of the world – a plain!

Same phenomenon is found in Revelation where the verbs are not subjunctive but are past or present tense showing that future events have already begun and the results are absolutely certain and assured

Again remember the prophecy is symmetrical. There are five stanzas of three verses each. It begins and ends with the Servant's exaltation first and fifth stanzas and set within this is the story of Christ's rejection in stanzas two and four, which in turn frame the centerpiece stanza 3, Isaiah 53:4-6, where the atoning significance is revealed.

Isaiah 53:1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed.

Note the “my” and “our” of the outer stanzas one and five and the “we” and “our” of Isaiah 53:1-6. The word “our” in Isaiah 53:1 “who hath believed our report” raises the question of who is the “our”? The “our” was God and Isaiah. “Who hath Believed?”

John 12:37-40 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? (Isaiah 53:1) 39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that

they should not see with [*their*] eyes, nor understand with [*their*] heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. (Isaiah 6:10)

Romans 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (Quoted Isaiah 53:1)

The language of V:1 suggests that "no one" believed the report, but Paul shows that the statements here are hy-per'-bo-le.

Those who hearkened were the apostles of the New Testament Church and those who followed their leadership. Nevertheless, a very small percentage of the Jews of Old Israel believed & obeyed the Son of God fully justified the hyperbole "who", meaning "few".

"the arm of the LORD" always means the saving power of God ...

Exodus 6:6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

"the arm of the Lord" was revealed to anyone who saw & heard Jesus.

Isaiah 53:2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, [there is] no beauty that we should desire him.

He won't be body beautiful like Zeus or Hercules, yet many women were attracted to Him, rugged fishermen of Galilee followed Him and the wimps and money changers of the temple fled His wrath ...

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were [our] faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

None of the trappings of wealth, office, social status, or any other such things which are so honored among men, belonged to Jesus.

The Third Stanza: Isaiah 53:4, 5 & 6

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

V:4 This is the heart of the Song of the Servant; here we learn why Jesus suffered, that it was not for Himself but for us that He suffered. Note the emphatic recurrence of the word "our," as in our griefs, our sorrows, our transgressions, our peace, and our healing.

It is here that the atoning significance of His suffering is revealed.

Right here is the vital heart of Christianity: The case of Adam's race was hopeless. All had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

"There is none righteous no not one" Romans 3:10.

The penalty of sin is death, and the justice of God required that the penalty be paid. Without Christ as our Saviour, all of the human race would have been lost forever. There was no human righteous enough to pay the debt. What was the solution? God Himself stepped into the human race and took upon Himself flesh and blood and in the person of His Son, He paid the penalty for our sins Himself upon the tree!

The words "borne our griefs" in V:4

In the Hebrew are literally "borne our sicknesses" this is a reference to Jesus' healing all manner of sicknesses, and diseases. cf: Isaiah 35

"smitten of God and afflicted" This means that the terrible and unlawful punishments, even death, that befell Jesus were considered by the people as being the natural result of the sins of Jesus.

Such thinking as the man born blind in John 9, and the snake bite of Paul on Malta in Acts 28, were wrongly considered by people the result of sin. Example: Job "friends" thought Job had a hidden sin.

Isaiah 53:5 But he [was] wounded for our transgressions, [he was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

"Chastisement ..." (Isaiah 53:5)

Pilate ordering the chastisement of Jesus brought the fulfillment of this specific prophecy. The chastisement was for "our sins" and for "our peace". The Roman Procurator declared when he commanded the chastisement that it was not for anything that Jesus was guilty of ... Because Pilate declared Him innocent on that very occasion!

Matthew 27:26 Then released he Bar-ab'bas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

"Stripes" Excavations have uncovered the old judgment seat of Pilate, the very truncated pillar upon which our Lord was probably chained, while two Roman soldiers, standing one on each side, with the brutal whips made lethal and bloody by small pieces of bone or glass chips attached to the cords of the whips, applied the awful punishment, first to the back, sides, buttocks, and then the upper legs of our Lord.

The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all ..." (Isaiah 53:6)

No greater declaration from the LORD was ever given than this affirmation that Jesus Christ suffered for the sins of all men.

The perfect, sinless Jesus was a sacrifice sufficient to atone for the sins of all mankind who come to Him in the appointed way.

I John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Note this was NOT a limited atonement for the Elect only but here the Isaiah prophecy and I John 2 states that the LORD laid the sins of "the whole world", all men; upon Jesus. His sacrifice is sufficient for whosoever will come and take of the waters of life freely. John 3:16

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**I Peter 2:22-25 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he
threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth
righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the
tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by
whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray;
but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.**

Stanza Four (4): Isaiah 53:7, 8 & 9

**Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened
not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a
sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.**

**This stanza is a return to the theme of suffering stressing in the first
verse of this Stanza His silence in the face of His accusers, mockers,
and the "judges" of the tribunals before which He was arraigned ... the
various Kangaroo Courts & illegal night time trials.**

Silent: Before the High Priest:

**Matthew 26:62-63 And the high priest arose, and said unto him,
Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?
But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto
him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be
the Christ, the Son of God?**

Silent: Before Herod:

**Luke 23:8-9 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for
he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard
many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by
him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered
him nothing.**

Silent Before Pilate:

John 19:10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me?

knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

"As a lamb that is led to the slaughter ..." (Isaiah 53:7). This is an agricultural si'-mi-le based on the truth that a goat slaughtered in the traditional manner responds with blood-curdling cries that can be heard a country mile away; but a sheep submits to the butcher's knife silently. The same phenomenon occurs when both animals are sheared. Jesus submitted to the outrages against Him, offering no more resistance than a lamb, either sheared or slaughtered.

Isaiah 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

"In his humiliation ... his judgment was taken away ..." (Isaiah 53:8, as in LXX), the verdict of Pilate was one of innocence; but Pilate was swayed by the yells of the bloodthirsty mob; Pilate took away His judgment of innocence and ordered His crucifixion.

"The Greek Septuagint (LXX) of the O.T. renders part of this passage, as follows: V:8 In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away; who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth: because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death."

Here most translations and the Septuagint (LXX) vary considerably. Isaiah 53:8, for example, the Septuagint (LXX) states that it was Jesus' judgment of innocence pronounced by Pilate which was "taken away" through mob violence and the humiliation of Jesus; but in many translations it is Jesus who is taken away. We believe that both renditions are correct, because both are true. When Philip was led to the E-thi-o'-pi-an eunuch on the road to Ga'-za (Acts 8:29ff),

the portion of Isaiah the eunuch was reading and which became the basis of Philip's preaching Jesus unto him came from the LXX.

“He was taken from prison and from judgment”

Matthew 27:19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him

“who shall declare His generation”

"His generation who shall declare?" (Isaiah 53:7, LXX). There are two understandings of this, both of which may be right, for both are true.

(1) "Who shall declare the number of those who share His life, and are, as it were, sprung from him? Who can count his faithful children?"

(2) Bruce, however, rendered the clause, "Who can describe his generation?" Who indeed could describe that wicked generation of Jews which despised and murdered the Son of God?

What a crescendo of shame was reached by that evil generation who resisted every word of the Saviour of mankind, mocked Him, hated Him, denied the signs he performed before their very eyes, sub'orned witnesses to swear lies at His trials, rejected and shouted out of court the verdict of innocence announced by the governor of the nation, and through political blackmail, mob violence, and personal intimidation of the Procurator, demanded and achieved His crucifixion? Who could describe the moral idiocy of a generation that taunted the helpless victim even upon the tree, that gloated over His death, and when He arose from the dead, bribed the witnesses with gold to deny that it had occurred? Who indeed can describe that generation?

Killed – The death “cut off out of the land of the living”

Matthew 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Isaiah 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither [was any] deceit in his mouth

“... grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death” The burial: This is the most amazing prophecy in Isaiah. The significant fact is that the word "wicked" here is plural, and the word "rich" is singular.

Matthew 27:38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. (PLURAL)

Those who condemned Christ to be crucified with two malefactors on the common execution ground, meant His grave was to be with the 2 wicked thieves with whom Jesus would have been buried in one unmarked grave ... but Joseph of Ar'i-ma-the-a appealed to Pilate.

There is no way that this prophecy could have been fulfilled by one grave; two are absolutely required for the plural word graves!

“... with the rich (SINGULAR) in his death”

Matthew 27:57-60 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Ar'i-ma-the-a, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: 58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. 59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

Stanza Five (5) Isaiah 53:10, 11 & 12 - Victory!

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief: when thou shalt 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

“...he shall see [his] seed,”

II Timothy 2:8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Prolong His Days “He shall prolong his days ...” For one who was indeed put to death (He was cut off out of the land of the living”) this is a prophecy of his resurrection from the dead. By no other means, could it be said that of one who had poured out his soul unto death & was buried that He would "prolong his days." Christ Himself stated:

Revelation 1:18 I [am] he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

This stanza points to the glorification which God appointed for the Suffering Servant after the sufferings ended, solving the problem that remained insoluble for the O.T. pre-Christian prophets.

I Peter 1:10-12 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace [that should come] unto you: 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

“the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” Added to the exaltation prophesied in the first stanza, the glorious eternity of The Lord Jesus Christ is clearly foretold.

This last stanza makes the worldwide success of Christ the marvel of all the ages.

He, God, shall see His seed (singular), Christ, and prolong His days.

The disciples who were first Called Christians number His followers in the countless millions; He shall prolong His days, be raised from the dead; the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand, now righteousness shall prosper in the world; He shall justify many, countless millions shall be saved from their sins through him;

Luke 24:33-34 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

Isaiah 53:11 He shall see of the tra-vail' of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

“shall my righteous servant justify many”

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

“Justify” we are declared “not guilty” on technicality the debt is paid

II Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Isaiah 53:12 Therefore will I divide him [a portion] with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

“will divide him a portion with the great” Jesus Christ shall attain worldwide and every generation perpetual "greatness."

In connection with this it should be remembered that all history falls into B.C. & A.D. (After His advent)

No Great Person on earth is or has been discussed more than Jesus!

I Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Hebrews 12:2-4 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Psalm 89:27 Also I will make him [my] firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

“numbered with the transgressors”

Luke 22:37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

“made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).

This prophecy was fulfilled by the Saviour Himself when he prayed for those who nailed him to the cross,

Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Sources: KJV, theWord.com, Coffman Commentary, listened to: Greg @ The Narrow Path & George Faull @ Summit Theological.