

## The Suffering Servant

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

Isaiah 53:4

I sometimes wonder if we actually realize what the death of Jesus means. Isaiah put into words one of the most wonderful passages about the work of Christ. This passage forms the apex or focal point of the Old Testament. All of the marvelous attributes of what God's Son would do for us are succinctly presented in Isaiah 53.

When the Jews first saw Jesus' suffering, they concluded that God was punishing Him for His sins. However, they failed to understand the true significance of Christ's sacrifice. The griefs (sicknesses) which the Servant bore and the sorrows (mental anguish) which He carried were not His, but ours (cp. Matthew 8:17). He willingly took these burdens on Himself.

The innocence of Jesus is very much like Job. Job was “punished” as a test of his righteousness, but his friends saw a completely different picture. They, like the Jews, were not able to comprehend the plan that God had put in motion. If some today are not able to understand God's plan of salvation, they will not open their minds to His blessings and thus will lose their chance of eternal life.

Psalms 22:16 and Zechariah 12:10 both corroborate Isaiah 53:5 in that the Servant was pierced for our transgressions. This word suggests a mortal wound. Isaiah 59:2 says, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” Romans 6:23 adds, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Our transgressions are nothing more than acts of rebellion against God's law. These acts must either be punished or pardoned.

Without the Servant's help, we would have remained in a relationship which could not save our lost souls. Jesus Christ, by His stripes, healed us. When He sacrificed Himself for our sins, He allowed us to be restored to a completely harmonious relationship with God. Isaiah 53:6 teaches us that we all are like sheep that have gone astray into sin. This verse is an excellent commentary on the idea of iniquity, because it indicates that we reject God's way for man's way.

An important point to note is that while we have gone astray into sin, we can still have the hope of forgiveness. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” As we commit sins which we think could never be forgiven, God assures us that His thoughts on forgiveness are higher than ours.

God's provision is wonderful. He has furnished a glorious way to be reconciled back to Him (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). The Servant's work was the most important to ever take place on the earth. I hope we can all gain a little more insight into the one who "taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

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