

April 4, 2021

“The Suffering Servant”
Lesson 4 of Unit

Isaiah 53:4-11

Intro

Isaiah is one of the best-known Old Testament prophets. New Testament writers quoted from his prophecies over 60 times! And his period as a prophet was lengthy, at least 60 years, if not more. So God used Isaiah for as a trustworthy servant who delivered His words faithfully. Which brings us to today's passage.

This passage is one of four “Servant Songs” in Isaiah; the others are in 42:1-9, 49:1-6, and 50:4-9. Today's passage is the second half of the fourth “song”, which goes from 52:13 to 53:12. The Servant Songs describe one individual who has a very special role to fulfill, to carry out tasks that neither the nation of Israel or even the faithful remnant after the exiles could do.

This passage has been rightly seen as fulfilled by Jesus alone. As our text says, “No other figure appears in Scripture who claims to be the servant, and only Christ fulfills all that was written about the servant in these passages.” These prophecies of Isaiah about the Servant were made about 700 years before Jesus was born. It is hard to read these verses and not see what Jesus has done for us.

Read Isaiah 53:4-11

1. vs. 4: Usually, a person who is subjected to suffering is seen as being punished
 - They are getting the “rewards” for their behaviors
 - This verse says the Servant is taking “our pain and bore our suffering”
 - This is exactly what Jesus did on the cross for us.
 - Jesus was being “punished by God”, but not for what Jesus did wrong
 - He was punished by God to take God's wrath for our sins.

2. vs. 5: This verse describes an action of the cross
 - He was “pierced for our transgressions”
 - This applies to the nails through Jesus' feet and wrists
 - This could also apply to the sword thrust into his side
 - This verse goes along with what vs. 4 says
 - Jesus was pierced for “our transgressions”
 - Crushed for “our iniquities”
 - The second half of this verse describes two benefits we receive from Jesus's suffering
 - We get peace
 - This obviously happens only when we acknowledge our sinfulness and seek forgiveness
 - We must accept Christ's death as a substitution for the price of our own sins
 - When we do this, we get to live in peace that our sins have been paid for
 - We get to live in peace with God, instead of fearing the retribution to come
 - We are healed
 - Primarily, we are healed spiritually
 - His wounds paid the price for our sins, so we have a new life

That spiritual healing also provides emotional / psychological healing
Sin produces guilt, which eats at us emotionally
The healing we get from receiving forgiveness is emotional as well
Prov. 17:22 says, “A cheerful heart is a good medicine”
If our sins are forgiven, how could we not have a cheerful heart?
This tells me that the healing we get is also physical in some ways

This phrasing “are healed” suggests two aspects of when we are healed
“Are healed” sounds like past tense
It’s either already happened or already provided for
The phrase also suggests we are being healed from that point on
In other words, the healing is from this point forward
Consider what that means—
We have spiritual and emotional healing available from the start of
our relationship with Jesus, and continuing without stop until we are
no longer on this earth!

3. vs. 6: Describes humanity as “sheep”

Sheep are not overly intelligent, and wander away towards harm without thinking about it
Sounds like an unfortunately accurate comparison

The middle phrase shows that each of us is accountable for the sins we commit

“Each of us”—not some of us, but it’s really saying “each and every one of us”

“has turned to our own way”—we have each chosen to walk away

--we went the way we wanted to go (our own way)

The final phrase goes along with vs. 4-5

The Servant has taken on the iniquities of sheep who chose to go the wrong way

“All” seems to be emphasized in this phrase

We are all guilty of doing this; there is no one who isn’t at fault here

4. vs. 7: The Servant’s reaction to His treatment

Two more negative treatments are mentioned here:

“oppressed and afflicted” and “led like a lamb to the slaughter”

His reaction is to say nothing, to keep quiet

This would seem hard for any of us to do

With Jesus, this reaction seems especially unusual

He is God, and He has the power to call on angels or speak things into being

He is referred to as a lamb and a sheep

That echoes the description of humanity given in vs. 6

Seems to say that Jesus becomes like us in our weakness

Lambs were used in sacrifices —“a lamb to the slaughter”

Despite having the power, Jesus chooses to act like a sacrificial lamb

5. vs. 8: The injustice of The Servant's situation

He was taken away "by oppression and judgment"

This is seen in Jesus' trial

It was a rigged trial with a predetermined outcome

Deut. 17:6 says a death verdict must have 2-3 corroborating witnesses

The witnesses in Jesus' trial didn't agree with each other (Mr.14)

Those who should have protested this unfair treatment didn't protest

The leaders of the nation were the ones who sought and carried out the trial

He was "cut off from the land of the living"—he died as a result of unfairness

The last part of vs. 8 shows the view God has of what would happen

"for the transgression of my people he was punished"

This action has a divine, positive element to it

6. vs. 9: Further injustice to the Servant

He was put in the position of the wicked, or a criminal, unfairly

The crowd asked for the murderer Barabbas, rather than the innocent Jesus

He was nailed to a cross, a curse to the Jews, and the fate of a criminal

He was put between two thieves

Jesus had committed no violent acts that would call for crucifixion by Romans

The prophecy of vs. 9 also says he would have a grave with the rich

Normally, criminals would remain unburied

Jesus is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea

He is a wealthy man, who asked for the body to bury it

7. vs. 10: The purpose of the Servant's suffering

The Servant is crushed and suffers, but...

God uses that to make His life an "offering for sin"

The Servant takes the place of the sin offering, becoming a lamb without defect

The aftermath of His suffering

The Servant will "prolong his days"

This seems a prediction of Jesus being alive again, resurrecting from the grave

The Servant will "see his offspring"

Since Jesus had no earthly children, this seems to refer to his follower, his disciples

8. vs. 11: Looking back at what has happened

The verse begins "after He has suffered"

The suffering is over; the Servant is now done with His suffering

"He will see the light of life and be satisfied"

Jesus saw life (earthly) after being resurrection

Jesus saw life (eternal) when He arose and went back to heaven

Satisfaction seems not a strong enough word here

Surely Jesus is satisfied with what He's done

He died on the cross to accomplish the Father's will

"It is finished"

When we finish a significant task, are we "satisfied"?

There seems to be a great joy, a relief, a sense of accomplishment

All these and more seem more accurately to describe how Jesus
must have felt when it was all over

Application: Today's lesson passage is incredible. It prophesies multiple events that occurred in the last day of Jesus' life, told 700 years before they happened. Incredible.

This passage also shows us that Jesus' death was a planned event. God knew what was going to be done, and who it was who needed to do it. Incredible.

Finally, we need to understand how fortunate we are. We have the full revelation of God's dealings with man in our Bibles. Isaiah and the other prophets didn't fully see and understand how their prophecies would be fulfilled. But we get to see "the whole picture"! Incredible.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for passages like these that show us Your provision to take care of our sin. Thank you for Jesus enduring unjust suffering for people who justly deserve that punishment for our sins. On this Easter day, we thank you and praise you for such love and sacrifice. In Jesus' name, Amen.