

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 Isaiah's Prophecy of the Suffering Messiah¹

I've heard that Isaiah 53 is the most quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament. Jesus applied this prophecy to Himself (Lu. 22:37, quoting Is. 53:12). The Ethiopian Eunuch was saved after Philip helped him understand this passage (Ac. 8:28-37). Peter quotes from the passage and applies it to Jesus (1 Pe. 2:21-25, quoting Is. 53:5-7). So it is a prominent OT passage that NT writers quote.

I recently heard the testimony of a Jewish man who was very hostile against Christianity who became a believer after studying Isaiah 53. I would not be surprised that many Jews have had that same experience. The passage clearly points to Jesus; I don't know how it could apply to anyone else.

This amazingly accurate prophecy was written about 700 years before Jesus was born, yet it describes His suffering in great detail.

As today is Good Friday, it's appropriate for us to focus on Jesus' death and what it means. We know that Jesus' death was not the end of the story, but it was a very important—in fact, necessary—part of the story. Without Jesus' death, Christianity cannot exist. The faith is based on Jesus' death.

Today we'll be considering this familiar passage from Isaiah—parts of chapters 52 and 53. This section of the book clearly foretells much about the death of Jesus.

The book of Isaiah is commonly divided into two main parts. The first part, chapters 1-39, deal mostly with Israel's sin and inescapable judgment. Chapters 40-66 describe God's promise to redeem fallen Israel. We find here that the suffering and death of God's servant, the Messiah, is a necessary part of God's plan of salvation.

Let's see how Jesus' fulfilled this prophecy.

¹ Some of this from David Cloud - Way of Life Literature

I. Christ endured great suffering.

- A. Probably the most obvious assertion of this passage is that the Messiah would suffer.

Luke 22:37 [Jesus said] ... *this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.'*

Luke 24:46 [Jesus] said ..., "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer ..."

- B. We see various aspects of his suffering in this passage.

1. 52:14 He was beaten to a pulp. That's exactly what happened when Jesus was beaten, flogged and then crucified.
2. 53:4 He is stricken, smitten, and afflicted.
3. .5 He is wounded and bruised.
4. .5 He is beaten with stripes (cf. Mt. 27:26).
5. .7 He is oppressed and afflicted; he's brought as a lamb to slaughter.
6. .8 He is imprisoned and under judgment.
7. The Gospels reveal the incredible suffering that Jesus endured.
 - a) He was struck in the face (Mt. 26:67; Lu. 22:64).
 - b) His brow was pierced with a crown of thorns (Mt. 27:29-30).
 - c) He was smitten on the head with a reed (Mt. 28:30).
 - d) His beard was plucked (Isa. 50:6).
 - e) He was flogged with a whip (Mt. 27:26).
 - f) He was crucified by the piercing of His hands and feet (Ps. 22:16).
 - g) His side was pierced with a spear (Joh. 19:23).

We've probably all heard graphic, detailed descriptions about the process of crucifixion and how brutal that practice was. Isa 53 fits very well with the suffering Jesus endured on the cross.

8. Because of his suffering, Jesus was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Jesus suffered in various ways:

1. Physical suffering
2. Psychological suffering—suffering of the soul or heart.

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.

Isa 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: ...

These words seem to describe what Jesus experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:37–38 ... He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. ...

Jesus experienced profound internal, mental suffering, which can be very painful, in some ways even worse than physical suffering.

3. Spiritual suffering

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

Isa 53:6 ... the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

53:11end ... He shall bear their iniquities.

Isa 53:12 ... he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many

- a) He experienced the load of sin—he “became sin for us.” He bore our iniquities.
- (1) Jesus had never sinned. He hated sin. On the cross, he suddenly experienced all the guilt and inner turmoil caused by sin.
 - (2) Imagine experiencing the sins of the whole world all at once.

- b) He endured the wrath of God against sin; the cup of God’s wrath was fully poured out on him.

Quote: Jesus became the object of the intense hatred of sin and vengeance against sin which God had patiently stored up since the beginning of the world. But at the cross the fury of all that stored-up wrath against sin was unleashed against God’s own Son.²

All the punishment that our sins deserved was poured out on Jesus as he hung on the cross. So suffering under that burden of sin and experiencing God’s wrath against sin must have created profound spiritual suffering.

- c) He was abandoned by God.

Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). In some way beyond our comprehension, God the Father turned his back on God the Son. As Jesus bore our sins and carried our guilt, he was forsaken by God.

9. And of course his suffering resulted in his death.

Isaiah 53:9 *And they made **His grave** with the wicked— But with the rich at His **death**...*

²Wayne A. Grudem

53.12 *he hath poured out his soul unto death:*

After being betrayed by a disciple and denied by a disciple, after most of this followers had fled, and after being brutally tortured, He died between two criminals and was buried in the grave of a stranger (Mt. 27:57-60).

Trans: Jesus endured great suffering, far beyond what we can even comprehend. Jesus knew that this would happen, and he was willing to endure such great suffering for us.

John 15:13 *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

II. Christ was rejected by His people.

Isaiah 53:3 *He is despised and **rejected by men**, ... He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

- A. He was rejected by His own brothers (Joh. 7:5).
- B. He was rejected by his own nation. He came unto His own and His own received him not (John 1:11). Jesus applied Isaiah 53:1-3 to the unbelief of the nation Israel (Joh. 12:37-38).
- C. He was rejected by the people of his own hometown, Nazareth (Lu. 4:28-30).
- D. He was rejected by the people of his adopted town, Capernaum (Mt 11:23).
- E. He was rejected by the Jewish religious leaders (Mt 12:24; Jn 8:48, 52).
- F. His own people demanded that He be crucified (Mark 15:13-14).
- G. He was betrayed by one of his own disciples (Mt. 26:47-50), and one of his closest disciples denied him three times. Most of his disciples ran away when he was arrested.

At various points in his ministry, large numbers of people rejected him.

John 6:66 *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*

Trans: This prophecy that the majority of people would reject Jesus continues to be fulfilled every hour of every day. Every time a sinner rejects Christ as Lord and Saviour, he is fulfilling this prophecy. Jesus still is despised, rejected, and not esteemed.

III. Christ made atonement for his people.

Isaiah 53:5 *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.*

- A. **Twelve times this passage emphasizes** the fact that Christ suffered in the place of sinners. The substitutionary suffering of the Messiah is obviously the emphasis and focus of the great prophecy. Cf. vss. 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12
- B. To make atonement means to satisfy a debt, and Christ paid the full sin debt for every sinner who receives Him. We describe Christ's atonement as "substitutionary," meaning it was done in the place of another.
- C. Jesus' death follows the OT pattern of the innocent victim dying for the benefit of the guilty sinner. The life of the victim is taken in place of the life of the sinner. The wages of sin is death, and Jesus took that death for us.
- D. Isaiah 52:15a *So shall He sprinkle many nations. ...*
 1. The sprinkling refers to the sprinkling of blood in the OT sacrificial system (Ex. 24:8; Le. 8:30). The animal was killed and its blood sprinkled on the altar, and that would make atonement for sin of the one offering the sacrifice.
 2. But Jesus sacrifice for sin covered more than one person. The "many nations" refers to the fact that Christ's death will extend to people far beyond the Jews.

John 1:29 *... John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

3. We find in the NT that Jesus' death is sufficient to pay for the sins of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Anyone can come to Christ and find forgiveness of sins.

1 John 2:2 *He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

- E. This payment for our sins resulted in the propitiation of God's wrath.

53.10 *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him;*

53.11 *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:*

1 Jo 4:10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins.*

1. "To propitiate" means "to turn aside wrath, to be placated or appeased." God's wrath against our sin was turned aside because Jesus endured God's full wrath against sin. Jesus satisfied God's wrath against us by suffering as our substitute.
2. Romans 3:25 tells us that God put forward Christ as a "propitiation," i.e., "a sacrifice that fully bears God's wrath." Since God's wrath against us is now paid for and satisfied, God can look on us with grace and favor.
3. At the end of his suffering on the cross, just before his death, he said "It is finished." He had borne the full measure of God's wrath against sin and there was no penalty left to pay.³ He had fully appeased/satisfied God's wrath against our sin.

Hebrews 9:26 *... but now once in the end of the world hath [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

That's one reason that once you are saved you can never be lost. If Jesus appeased God's wrath against our sin, then God can't hold it against us. Rom 8:1 "no condemnation..."

³Wayne A. Grudem

4. Christ's vicarious atonement is the central event of history and the foundation for God's eternal salvation. Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Re. 13:8). The entire NT bears witness that Jesus' death was a sacrificial, substitutionary payment for sins.

"God hath set forth [Jesus] to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins" (Ro. 3:25).

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Ro. 5:6).

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro. 5:8).

"... when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Ro. 5:10).

"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" (2 Co. 5:21).

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Ga. 3:13).

"[Jesus] gave himself a ransom for all, ..." (1 Ti. 2:6).

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, ..." (1 Pe. 3:18).

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jo. 2:2).

IV. Christ's suffering and death provides salvation for believers.

Isaiah 53:11–12 *11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall **my righteous servant justify many**; for he shall bear their iniquities. ... 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.*

- A. Jesus suffering and death provides justification for believers—“he shall justify many.” To be justified (δικαιωθή) is to be declared righteous. When we believe in Jesus, God credits Jesus' righteousness to us (2 Cor 5:21).
- B. We receive that justification by faith. Rom 5:1; Eph 2:8-9
- C. Jesus intercedes on our behalf before God.
 - 1. Before salvation, we are under the wrath and condemnation of God. We have no intercessor before God, no one to argue on our behalf. All we have is an accuser and a slanderer—Satan.
 - 2. But after salvation, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

We receive the benefits of Jesus death by repenting of our sin and believing that Jesus is the Son of God who died for us and rose again. We are saved by faith, not by religious rituals or good works.

The prophet Isaiah asks the question, “Who hath believed our report?” That is a good question to consider on this Good Friday. Do you believe this report? Do you believe that Jesus fulfills this OT prophecy written at least 700 years before he was born? Who else could it apply to? Who else fulfills this prophecy? No one. Only Jesus fulfills this prophecy; only he could fulfill it.

Only when you believe this prophecy about Jesus do the benefits of the prophecy apply to you. Only when you believe in Jesus do you receive salvation, propitiation, atonement, forgiveness, peace, and healing. Only when you recognize yourself as a sheep going astray and you trust in Jesus as the one who was stricken and afflicted for your transgressions will you be saved. It’s by trusting in Jesus that you are justified—made right in God’s sight.

Don’t be among those who despise and reject Jesus. Don’t hide your face from him; don’t despise him; don’t insult him. God has laid your iniquity upon Jesus in order to save you from your sins. If you want him to bear your iniquity and intercede for you, you must repent of your sins and trust in Jesus as the “lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”