



The Divine Servant

The Song of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

The Divine Servant (52:13-15)

[The Divine Sufferer \(53:1-3\)](#)

[The Divine Substitute \(53:4-6\)](#)

[The Divine Sacrifice \(53:7-9\)](#)

[The Divine Satisfaction \(53:10-12\)](#)

This poem is one of the grandest and most loved passages in the Word of God. Our faith is fed and our hope is nourished by this great Song of the Suffering Servant.

Hebrew prophecy rises to its highest pinnacle with the theme of substitutionary sacrifice of the innocent Lamb of God. In what has been called Isaiah's "Rhapsody of Redemption" the Old Testament reaches a grand climax in its revelation of the Redeemer. All of the inspired movements come together in this symphony on salvation through the vicarious sacrifice of the Suffering Savior. The emphasis of the poem is on the "Messiah victorious and triumphant." It is through the Servant's substitutionary suffering that salvation is achieved and He is highly exalted.

With powerful language, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah describes how the grace of God has delivered the people out of the bondage of sin through His Suffering Servant. Who is this magnificent deliverer?

[Yahweh Speaks of His Servant \(52:13a\).](#)

The Song of the Suffering Servant begins in 52:13, not at 53:1. The end of chapter fifty-two is an introduction to the song of the sufferer. Scholars have observed how the progress of the poem gathers energy and the verses get longer. The song begins on a triumphant note of success. Isaiah assumes his readers know the three previous [Servant Songs](#). Let's reverently and carefully examine "the most important text in the Old Testament."

The Servant has a divine mission to accomplish (42:1-4) through suffering (49:1-7; 50:4-7). He has reserved telling us the reason for the intense suffering until now. The LORD introduces His Servant and the major themes of the poem in the opening verses. The themes and sub-themes will appear and reappear in great sweeping movements.

Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted.

There is no greater honor in the Old Testament than being called the "servant" of Yahweh.

God the Father introduced His Son at the beginning of His public ministry. At the baptism of Jesus and later at His transfiguration God the Father spoke from heaven saying, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17; 17:5). On occasion Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me" (John 8:28).

The Success of the Divine Servant (v. 13b).

Our song begins on a triumphant note of victory. God's servant will "prosper" in His redemptive work. He will prove to be successful in God's eyes. The verb includes both intelligent and successful action. God's chosen Servant will have the insight and ability to reach His goal. The result of His prudent manner will issue in achievement. He will prosper. It is an exceptional measure of success. He will achieve what He set out to do. The success of the Servant comes because God causes Him to prosper (53:10). This will not be the way men will view Him. They will see him as being punished for His own sins. However, He will accomplish much through His wise dealings because He is God's servant and God is His source of wisdom and blessings.

Keil suggests a chain of thought in this extreme humiliation and great exaltation of the Messiah:

He will rise up,
He will raise Himself up still higher,
He will stand on high.

The Amplified Bible reads: "He shall be exalted and extolled, and shall stand very high." It is an ever-increasing exaltation of the Messiah, which leads to an extreme exaltation. Isaiah uses words usually reserved for God. The powerful triad of verbs reads: "He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." He will be high and lifted up and to the highest degree exalted. God gives His Son and A+++ for His work. He did very well.

Has anyone ever achieved greater success than the Lord Jesus Christ? The only place where such a great exaltation has ever been fulfilled is the resurrection, ascension and reign of Jesus Christ. He towers above all other men throughout history. Isaiah says the Servant will receive the very highest exaltation. It will be a complete and absolute exaltation. God will give Him a name that is above every name. Therefore, He is the only one who can possibly deliver His people.

The Scriptures present an ever-increasing exaltation of Christ. "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (Acts 2:32-33). "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of your fathers, has glorified His Servant, Jesus . . ." (Acts 3:13, cf. vv. 14-15, 18). "God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways" (v. 26). Acts 1:1-11 gives a historical account of the ascension of Jesus Christ.

He will achieve unusual exaltation, but it comes only after extreme humiliation.

The Supreme Suffering of the Divine Servant (v. 14).

This plaintive and sorrowful song is filled with recurring broken emotional sobbing. It is full of strong contrasting bright light and exceedingly dark shadows. The Servant doesn't speak or even appear in the passage, but He "haunts" the song. Of course, the reason for the broad sweep of emotions is the largeness of the theme of the song, which is the vicarious, substitutionary atonement that is provided by this Suffering Servant.

Men will be so astonished at His state when they see how He has been so marred by wounds and stripes. Nevertheless, He will also become so elevated that kings and nations will be struck dumb with astonishment. In astonishment they shut their mouths as they react to a situation that has caught them totally unaware.

Just as many were astonished at you, *My people*.
So His appearance was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men.

Isaiah tells us the sufferings of the Servant were to such a depth and degree that they were more than any person has ever endured. Men would be astonished and filled with horror at the sight of His marred appearance. They would be appalled by the agony that was heaped upon Him. His suffering would be so intense and severe that His form would be so distorted that it would lose all likeness of a man. No wonder when these words were actually fulfilled in history they "startled many nations." Men through the ages have been astonished by the spectacle of His cross and His glory through suffering.

It is blank astonishment and bewilderment excited by the spectacle of unparalleled suffering that is in the minds of the beholders. The astonishment is a paralyzing astonishment. It means "to be desolate or waste, to be thrown into a desolate or benumbed condition, petrified. "

"Just as many were astonished at you" My Jewish people, "so His (the Suffering Servant's) appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men." One's astonishment is as grand as the other. The people will be "astonished," i.e., paralyzed with astonishment, because their views of Him were so distorted. They will look upon Him as one of their own that had leprosy and they would cry, "Unclean!"

Why were they astonished? It is His disfigurement. "So His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men" (v. 14b,c). His appearance was so marred that He no longer appeared as a human. It is a strong word. Literally, "so disfigured, his appearance was not human" (Keil and Delitzsch). It was a distortion that destroys all likeness to a man. His mutilation and defacement was so great that He no longer appeared as a man. How terrible were the sufferings of the Suffering Servant! He appeared to be disfigured from a cruel disease. It wasn't leprosy. It was the effects of the Roman soldiers beating Him with scourges until His body was like bloody pulp. He was badly mutilated, more than any person could bear. Isaiah has in mind unthinkable suffering. This was an extreme humiliation for the Son of God, the Creator to endure at the hands of pagan creatures.

The crucifixion and scourging were the cruelest inventions of depraved minds to make suffering as horrible and painful as possible. It was so cruel that Roman law forbade its citizens to ever be crucified regardless of the circumstances.

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The most astonishing thing is the incredible association between the thing prophesied and its fulfillment. Keep in mind the prophet is writing this eight hundred years before it happened! Just as His exaltation and glorification were of the highest, so His degradation will be the most dishonored.

What makes the scene even more extreme is the fact that His own people regarded His disfigurement as a punishment for His own sins.

"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was *exceedingly* rich, yet for your sake He became *extremely* poor, that you through His poverty might become *exceedingly* rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9, *this writer's emphasis*).

Who were these people who are "astonished" at Him? Probably they are the people of "many nations" and their kings (v. 15). When people see Him at the Second Coming, they will be absolutely astounded.

The humiliation of Christ is seen in many passages of Scripture (Hebrews 9:11-16, 22-28; 10:10-21). Not only did He die for our sins, but He is also our only Mediator between God and sinful men. The ascended Lord is at the right hand of the Father in heaven interceding for us at this time.

The Supreme Exaltation of the Divine Servant (v. 15).

Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.

What will be the results this divine sufferer will accomplish? The Suffering Servant will "sprinkle many nations." The image is that of the priest sprinkling of blood of the sacrifice with the tips of the fingers upon the veil in the Temple and upon the Mercy Seat with the purpose of expiation.

The word translated "sprinkle" means "to cause to spring or leap" when applied to fluids, to sprinkle them. The fluid is sprinkled "upon" the person. Leviticus 4:6 reads, "and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary" (cf. 8:11; 14:7). Jesus Christ is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Peter wrote to Jewish people living outside of Israel saying, "that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood" (1 Peter 1:2).

The religious leaders regarded the Servant as unclean and in the need of purification rites. However, He is the pure and innocent priest who brings cleansing for others. The sprinkling has reference to cleansing from sin (1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 10:22; 12:24; 9:13-14).

Not only will He sprinkle many nations, but He will also "shut their mouths" in speechless astonishment. They will be dumbstruck. The overpowering impression that He will make upon rulers is He will leave them speechless with amazement. They will stand dumb with awe and amazement. We still "stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene." Nations will be astonished. They are electrified by surprise of the overpowering effect of the extreme humiliation and extreme exaltation of the Servant.

They will be dumbstruck because they miscalculated and prejudiced so badly the Servant. There is nothing they can say when they grasp the truth. The One who has been brought so low will be greatly exalted. They have seen nothing like this before and they are left speechless. Never was man brought so low, and never was anyone so elevated. The apostle Paul acknowledge this fact:

anyone so elevated. The apostle Paul acknowledge this fact:

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:8-11).

He will be exalted to the right hand of God (Philippians 2:9; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). Peter tells us the ancient Hebrew prophets "predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11).

The apostle Paul saw this verse as the fulfillment of Christ's commission to take the Gospel to those who have never heard (Romans 15:21).

Who is this divine servant? The words of this song can only be fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Those who have long held to the theory that the Servant is Israel are losing ground among scholars. No one else in history has ever gone from the deepest degradation possible to the loftiest glorification in heaven. It is something unheard of before. Even the most exalted men will stand in awe before Him. Examine these verses again in the light of the historical fulfillment of Jesus Christ. Let's reverently paraphrase this passage by changing only the pronouns that refer to the divine Servant with the name of Jesus Christ.

Behold, My servant will prosper,
Jesus Christ will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted.
Just as many were astonished at you, *My people*.
So *Jesus'* appearance was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men.
Thus *Jesus Christ* will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.

Go to next stanza [Isaiah 53:1-3 The Divine Sufferer](#)

Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your divine substitute who died in your place on the cross? Are you enjoying His peace and assurance that all your sins have been covered by the death of Jesus Christ? Ask Jesus Christ to be your personal savior today. Here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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