

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 - The Servant Suffers and Prospers

Introduction

The final of the 4 servant songs in Isaiah in which we have the full blown description of the Suffering Servant. We were introduced to that in the previous servant song in Isaiah 50.

Again we remember that this was not associated with Jesus until after his passion and resurrection and so for a good few hundred years before Jesus there would be those who sought to identify the servant. We might ask with hindsight, 'but who could fit the bill given all the magnitude of what is written?' We might envisage that any but Jesus would be little more than another of the martyrs of history - and maybe, for those seeking to understand it before Jesus, that was fine!

The suffering servant being the Messiah was never ever envisaged and as I have said a few times was unthinkable for Jesus' disciples. As we see how God fulfilled and outstripped all expectations with this OT prophecy, as well as others, we can expect the same for that in the NT. Hence, care when trying to see what God might do with NT prophecy concerning, say, the second coming of Jesus. In the end I suspect we will finally look and say, 'Well, I would never have guessed it, it is so perfect and fulfilling in every respect of the meaning of the word!'

It's good to think about how God might fulfil his

word but let us remember that he is better at doing it than we are!

Overview of the Servant - 52:13-15

Like an overture to a symphony many themes are here (cp John 1:1-8 to the gospel)

- The 'success' of his serving - v 13
- The suffering of his serving - v 14
- The universal benefits of his serving - v 15

The nature of the Servant - 53:1-3

An enigmatic question unless we see it as following on from 52:15

- An ordinary man - v 2 cp Philippians 2:6-7
- How do we square 2b with Jesus?
- Out of step with the religious authorities - v 3

The work of the Servant - 53:4-6

The Servant:

- Carried - v 4a
- Pierced and crushed - v 5a
- Punished - v5b

The Lord:

- Laid our iniquity - v 6b

We

- Considered him stricken by God
- Went astray like sheep - v 6a
- Turned to own way - v 6a
- Are healed by his wounds - v 5c

The perspective of the Servant - 53:7-9

Suffered in silent obedience - v 7 cp Philippians 2:8

Died for a purpose - v 8

Was buried as an innocent victim - v 9

The Master of the Servant - 53:10-12

Was behind it all - v 10a-b

Will bring the unexpected - vv 10c & 11a

Will use it all - v 10d

Will reward and exalt him - 11b-12 cp Philippians 2:9-11

How the Servants of Jesus may relate to this:

Share the 'success', suffering and benefits (52:13-15)

Be God centred rather than people or world centred (cp 53:1-3)

Be servants, heralds and ambassadors rather than rulers (cp 53:4-6)

Live for obedience rather than reward or acclaim (cp 53:7-9)

Leave the outcome of our service to the Lord and also the glory - (cp 53:10-12)

Appreciate the forgiveness and eternal life that we have from Jesus

Live sacrificially

Never fear public opinion when living to the Lord

Finally

In the parable of the talents Jesus says, Matthew 25:21

'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Paul writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

In Hebrews 12:1-4a

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.