

By His Wounds We are Healed: Jesus as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53)

I'm one of those people who loves esthetically pleasing things. I love walking around in beautiful gardens, reading the Classics, and listening to classical music and old hymns. For me, joy comes when a work of literature or song uses its structure to reflect the meaning communicated in words. One of my favorite hymns, "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted," blends structural beauty with deep anguish and pain. It uses a minor key and a slow meter to emit a heavy, sorrowful feel to Jesus' death. The song opens with Jesus' physical suffering, "stricken, smitten, and afflicted," a quotation from Isaiah 53. The last line ends with hope, literary h-o-p-e, and the longest note of that line says "Him." Not only is it literary artistry, it is lovely theology. It mingles Jesus' suffering and our hope in Him. I have laid the first and last verses out side-by-side.

Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted
by Thomas Kelly (1769-1855)

Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
See him dying on the tree!
This is Christ, by man rejected;
Here, my soul, your Savior see.
He's the long expected prophet,
David's son, yet David's Lord.
Proofs I see sufficient of it:
He's the true and faithful Word.

Here we have a firm foundation;
Here the refuge of the lost;
Christ, the rock of our salvation,
His the name of which we boast.
Lamb of God, for sinners wounded,
Sacrifice to cancel guilt!
None shall ever be confounded
Who on him their hope have built.

"Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted" reflects heavily upon Jesus' role as the ultimate Suffering Servant found in Isaiah 52:13–53:12). The Servant in Isaiah represents the future Savior who would atone for sins and offer hope and restoration. This is the same Servant who "opens blind eyes" and "brings out of prison those who sit in darkness" (Isa 42:7) that Jesus announced as himself in Luke 4 (cf. Week 2: HW 4). The servant's ability to "set prisoners free" comes from his resolve to suffer as the substitute for our sins. My pastor once put it this way: *For Jesus to be our Victor, He first had to become a Victim.*

For today's assignment, we will read a section of Isaiah 53 followed by a New Testament passage where Christ fulfills it. Afterward there is a space for you to reflect on what Christ endured for us.

The Lord's Servant Will Be Highly Exalted: Isaiah 52:13-15

¹³ See, my servant will act wisely; [*better: succeed or prosper]
he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.*

*¹⁴ Just as there were many who were appalled at him—
his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being
and his form marred beyond human likeness—*

*¹⁵ so he will sprinkle [clean] many nations,
and kings will shut their mouths because of him.*

For what they were not told, they will see,

and what they have not heard, they will understand.

What three actions will be done to the Servant in v. 13? _____

_____.

The idea of verse 13 is that the Messiah will succeed in accomplishing the actions of the three verbs. These verbs emphasize the Messiah's exalted position. In other words, the Suffering Servant will succeed as the Messiah for all people; he will not be thwarted.

Isa 52:13 New Testament Fulfillment: Read Phil 2:9-11. _____

Isa 52:14 New Testament Fulfillment: Read Matt 26:67. _____

The Lord's Servant is Despised and Rejected: Isaiah 53:1-3

¹Who has believed our message?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

²For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,

And like a root out of parched ground;

He has no stately form or majesty

That we should look upon Him,

Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

³He was despised and forsaken of men,

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

And like one from whom men hide their face

He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

New Testament Fulfillments: Read Mark 10:29-31; Luke 22:1-6. _____

The Lord's Servant is Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted: Isaiah 53:4-6

⁴Surely our griefs He Himself bore,

And our sorrows He carried;

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵But He was pierced through for our transgressions,

He was crushed for our iniquities;

The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,

And by His scourging we are healed.

⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray,

Each of us has turned to his own way;

But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all

To fall on Him.

New Testament Fulfillments: Read Mark 15:16-20; 1 Pet 2:21-25. _____

The Lord's Servant Died for Our Transgressions: Isaiah 53:7-9

*⁷He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.*

*⁸By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?*

*⁹His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.*

New Testament Fulfillments: Read Mark 14:60-61; 15:1-5, 27-28, 43-46.

The Lord's Servant Justifies Sinners Through His Blood: Isaiah 53:10-12

10 *But the LORD was pleased*

*To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.*

11 *As a result of the anguish of His soul,*

*He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.*

12 *Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,*

*And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.*

New Testament Fulfillments: Read Luke 23:34-35; Rom 5:9-10, 19.

Jesus Knows Our Suffering by Experience and Hears Us

In our suffering, we can receive great comfort from Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest. As the Scripture says, “we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb 4:15-16 NIV).

Take some time right now to go before God asking for help in a current trial or situation you are in.

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He's the long expected prophet,
David's son, yet David's Lord.
Proofs I see sufficient of it:
He's the true and faithful Word.

Tell me, all who hear him groaning,
Was there ever grief like this?
Friends through fear his cause disowning,
Foes insulting his distress;
Many hands were raised to wound him,
None would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced him
Was the stroke that justice gave.

You who think of sin but lightly
Nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the sacrifice appointed;
See who bears the awful load;
It's the Word, the Lord's Anointed,
Son of Man and son of God.

Here we have a firm foundation;
Here the refuge of the lost;
Christ, the rock of our salvation,
His the name of which we boast.
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