

## Exegetical Notes - Isaiah 53

### *“The Fingerprints Left Behind”*

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## Isaiah 53

### Verse 1

*Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of YHWH been revealed?*

- The “message” referred to is the message of the prophet.
- The prophet is asking who has believed what he has reported to be true.
- The “arm of YHWH” is the symbol of his strength. The prophet recognizes that only those to whom God reveals the truth will know it to be truth. All others will refuse to believe his message.

### Verse 2

*He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*

- “He” in this passage is the great suffering servant of Isaiah. He is the one sent from God to redeem Israel. “He” is the Messiah, the Savior of God’s people.
- This servant came to earth in helplessness. Like a “tender shoot in dry ground” he had no power. Without help he would have died. He came to earth as a helpless babe.
- He had no special place when he came, for he was not exceptionally well placed in human society. He was lowly born, without majesty or wealth or any special attraction.

### Verse 3

*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

- The servant was not received by the people of the earth. In fact, people hid their faces from him and would not acknowledge him to be

who he was. He was not given his rightful place in the world because men did not believe him to be who he was.

#### **Verse 4**

***Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.***

- And yet, even though people did not give him his place and even caused him to suffer, the servant carried their burdens, their sicknesses, their afflictions.
- And, as they watched him struggle under the weight their burden cast on him, they thought that he struggled because God had rejected him!

#### **Verse 5**

***But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.***

- The servant's flesh was pierced. His life was crushed out of him. And yet his punishment brought peace to those for whom he died and his wounding became their healing.

#### **Verse 6**

***We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and YHWH has laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

- Because we all abandoned God's way and went in our own way contrary to God's, this was God's plan for our redemption. He sent this servant to suffer the curse we had taken upon ourselves by our own choices. This was God's plan to bring us back to him.

#### **Verse 7-8a**

***He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away.***

- He willingly accepted his role in God's plan. The servant humbly submitted to all he endured.

#### **Verse 8b**

***And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people, he was stricken.***

- The servant was killed without leaving a natural descendant. He left no children behind. He was killed before he married or had kids, cut off in the prime of his life.

### **Verse 9**

***He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.***

- The manner of his death would indicate that he deserved to be treated as if he was a criminal even though, in fact, he had done nothing wrong. His body should have been among others of his kind. But instead he was buried in a rich's man's tomb.

### **Verse 10-11a**

***Yet it was YHWH's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though YHWH makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of YHWH will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life, and be satisfied;***

- All of this is God's plan and though the servant will suffer unjustly, because of his part in God's plan, he will be blessed. He will see the offspring that he did not have and he will live forever.

### **Verse 11b**

***...by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.***

- The phrase is better translated, "because they know him my righteous servant will justify many." Those who believe in him will be saved from the consequences of their sins.

### **Verse 12**

***Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.***

- The prophet declares that he will honor and worship the servant because he died to free the transgressor and to make intercession for sinners.

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