

# Isaiah 53...The Suffering Messiah

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It should be obvious that all is not well on Planet Earth. God's supernatural communique, the Bible, accurately analyzes the human dilemma and tells us the solution. It contains prophecies about a special individual who will come to Planet Earth to solve our problems. The prophets of Israel call Him the Anointed One - the Messiah. One of the most detailed descriptions about this unique individual is found in the 52nd and 53rd chapters of the prophet Isaiah.

*"Behold, My servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. According as many were appalled at thee - so marred was his visage unlike that of a man, and his form unlike that of the sons of men - so shall he startle many nations, kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they perceive. Who would have believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he shot up right forth as a sapling, and as a root out of a dry ground; he had no form nor comeliness, that we should look upon him, nor beauty that we should delight in him. He was despised, and forsaken of men, a man of pains, and acquainted with disease, and as one from whom men hide their face: he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely our diseases he did bear, and our pains he carried; whereas we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

*"But he was wounded because of our transgressions, he was crushed because of our iniquities: the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his stripes we were healed. All we like sheep did go astray. We turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath made to light on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, though he humbled himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away, and with his generation who did reason? For he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due. And they made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich his tomb; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

*"Yet it pleased the Lord to crush him by disease; to see if his soul would offer itself in restitution, that he might see his seed, prolong his days, and that the purpose of the Lord might prosper by his hand: Of the travail of his soul he shall see to the full, even My servant, who by his knowledge did justify the Righteous One to the many, and their iniquities he did bear. Therefore will I divide him a portion among the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the mighty; because he bared his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 52:13-53:12, translated from Hebrew in The Holy Scriptures, by The Jewish Publication Society of America)*

This amazing prophecy, written approximately 700 BC by the Jewish prophet Isaiah, describes an individual specially empowered to serve God - the Messiah. This Jewish man will be greatly exalted, but also humiliated. He will not only make an impact on Israel, but on the entire world. One day He will break into history and startle the world's leaders, who will shut their mouths in surprise as they finally understand who He is.

**The prediction goes on to say that although sent by the God of Israel, the majority of the Jewish people will not initially believe in Him! Instead, God's Servant will be despised and rejected. He will feel the full weight of mankind's problems. His life will be filled with suffering, pain, and grief. He will be burdened with our burdens, and experience our sufferings - both physical and spiritual.**

**We won't understand what He is accomplishing and will not value Him according to His true worth. We will assume that God is punishing this man for His own sins, but in reality, God's Servant did not deserve any punishment of His own. But He will be wounded for our transgressions, and suffer because of our wrong-doings. He will die to atone for the sins of the Jewish people and all the nations of the world. All of us have wandered away from God, and the Messiah will come to bring us back home to our Heavenly Father.**

**Despite being an honest, non-violent person, God's Servant will be terribly mistreated. Instead of protesting or complaining, He will accept injustice bravely and quietly. Then He will be unjustly put to death, and die in place of the nation of Israel. He will die with wicked men, and be buried in a rich man's tomb. Then He will be gloriously resurrected to life! God permits His afflicted and ultimately exalted Servant to endure suffering and death in order to remove the sins of many, so that men and women can have a right relationship with their Creator. God's Servant will be greatly rewarded for sacrificing Himself. He will be given a special place of prominence, and will in turn reward those human beings who believe in Him.**

**Do you have any idea if anyone has fulfilled this amazing prophecy, or has even come even close? History tells us that only one man - Yeshua of Nazareth (Jesus) - fulfilled this and many other incredible prophecies found on the pages of the Jewish Bible. He has impacted the world more than any other person who has ever lived. He died and came back to life, proving that He is the Jewish Messiah, God's Servant that was sent into this world to end man's alienation from God. Yeshua is the only One who can reconcile us to our Creator, bring peace, joy and meaning to our lives, and enable us to live forever and ever.**

**You can find out more about the implications of the life, death and resurrection of this astonishing individual on the pages of another Jewish book - the Brit Chadasha (New Testament). For more information about Messiah Yeshua and Messianic Judaism, you can call, write or e-mail:**

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### **Nine Reasons Why Isaiah 53 Refers to the Messiah - Not the Jewish People**

**1. There is a clear distinction in pronouns. Isaiah the prophet, a Jew, when speaking of himself and his nation Israel, uses the pronouns "we," "us" and "our." He describes the Servant as someone other than himself and his people by using the pronouns "he," "him" and "his." Since the speakers are clearly Isaiah's people Israel ("we"), then the Servant whom they describe ("he") must be Someone other than Israel. They cannot both be Israel.**

**2. In verse 8, Isaiah declares that the Servant was put to death "for the transgression of my people." Who are "my people?" Not the Gentiles, but Isaiah's people, the Jewish people. If the Servant died for Israel, the Servant cannot also be Israel. Therefore the Servant is distinct from the Jewish people.**

**3. The passage repeatedly claims the innocence of the Servant. Verses 4-6 say that His suffering would not be for His own sin, but for the sin of others. None of the prophets (including Isaiah), ever characterize Israel or any other nation as perfectly innocent (see Isaiah 1:1-31, 64:5). Since Isaiah affirms the Servant's innocence while at the same time affirming Israel's guilt, Israel cannot be the Servant.**

**4. The Servant was to be a voluntary and unresisting sufferer. He willingly accepts His suffering, offering Himself as a guilt offering, and pouring Himself out to death. His suffering are voluntary, His sufferings are intentional, His sufferings are silent. Israel has indeed suffered, but not willingly, intentionally, or silently. The sufferings of the Servant are of a different nature than the sufferings of the Jewish people.**

**5. In verses 8, 9, 10 and 12 the Servant dies a substitutionary death on behalf of others. He is cut off out of the land of the living, placed in a grave, and sacrificed for the guilt of others. However, the Bible declares that the nation of Israel never has been and never can be killed (see Jeremiah 31:34-36).**

**6. The Servant is described as an individual person, not as a corporate identity. The things that the Servant does can only be done individually, not corporately.**

**7. The suffering and death of the Servant brings righteousness and healing to those who accept Him. While Israel has suffered, our suffering have never brought righteousness or healing to the Gentiles. In fact, it brings judgement on the Gentiles for their sin of anti-Semitism. Our suffering has never brought healing to the anti-Semites guilty of these things. The Jewish people have suffered because of the Gentiles, but never on behalf of the Gentiles.**

**8. The Talmud and other early rabbinic writings, always refer to this passage as speaking of the Messiah. All the ancient rabbis understood this passage to be the individual known as the Messiah. Rashi, who lived around 1050 AD, was the first to interpret Isaiah 53 as referring to the nation of Israel suffering for the Gentiles. That view didn't become the dominant Jewish view until relatively recent times, in the 1800's.**

**9. Other passages in the book of Isaiah dealing with God's Servant refer to an individual, and not to the nation of Israel (see Isaiah 42:1-7, 49:1-13, especially 49:6).**

**Nine reasons written by Michael Rydelnick and Arnold Fruchtenbaum.**