

**Isaiah Saw His Glory #5
The Servant of the Lord
(Is. 50:4-11)**

Intro: In the latter half of Isaiah, there are four prophecies that focus on the Messiah as the Servant of the Lord. They are sometimes called the Servant Songs of Isaiah.

In the first one (Is. 42) we see the Servant's call to service, manner of service, goal of service, and success in service.

In the second one (Is. 49, which we'll not be studying in this series) we see his call to bring Israel back to God and how that His apparent failure in this task results in the salvation of the Gentiles as well as Israel.

Now let's consider the third Servant psalm in Is. 50. In it we are made aware for the first time in this series of the suffering the servant must endure. Amazingly the Servant speaks in Isaiah as if he has already lived and experienced this suffering. Isaiah lets this servant speak for himself. (Read Isaiah 50:4-9)

The Servant's Suffering

We see in the servant's soliloquy a prophet who has met with hostility. Poetically we can see that his experiences are described in terms of the body.

A Disciple's Tongue

The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. (Is. 50:4)

An Awakened and Open Ear

He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient, nor did I turn back. (Isaiah 50:4b-5)

A Stricken Back & Plucked-out cheeks, a spat-upon face

I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord God helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; (Isaiah 50:6a-7a)

A Face like flint

Therefore, I have set My face like flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. (Is. 50:7b)

What do these things say about the ideal servant's life?

He can encourage others by his teaching. His experience in suffering has enabled him to know how to sustain those weary from similar suffering.

He has listened to and obeyed God's words himself. His ear has been awakened to hear the words of the Lord; and his ears have been opened to listen and obey the words of the Lord.

He has suffered because of his obedience to the Lord. He has been beaten, abused, and humiliated; yet he patiently accepts it all.

He is determined to stay the course because of His hope. He knows that the Lord will help him and vindicate him.

Thus, we see not only the servants suffering; we also see:

The Servant's Faith in God's Vindication (The servant has...)

Faith in God's presence

He who vindicates Me is near; The servant know that the Lord is close.

Faith in His personal innocence

Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. The servant knows that he has done nothing to deserve the false accusations made against him.

Faith in the power and approval of the Lord

Behold, the Lord God helps Me; who is he who condemns Me? The servants knows that the Lord does not condemn him, though men may; and that the Lord will help Him overcome His enemies.

Faith in the ultimate judgment of the persecutors.

Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them. (Isaiah 50:8-9)

As we read, we may well ask the same question the Ethiopian asked of Phillip when reading from Isaiah the prophet, "Of whom does the prophet speak? Of Himself or someone else?" (Ac. 8)

Jesus, the fulfillment of the Suffering Servant

The Gospel picture of Jesus perfectly conforms to Isaiah's suffering servant. In every way the Lord fulfills the role of a true servant of the Lord.

He opened His ears to the word of God

And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. (John 8:29)

He suffered physically for his obedience to the Lord.

Jesus literally gave his back to his persecutors and his face to their spit. Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. (Matthew 27:26-31)

He set His face like flint in the midst of persecution.

As Jesus ministry came to a close Luke tells us that he was determined to make the journey to Jerusalem, though it would mean his death:

And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem; (Luke 9:51)

Face like flint indeed!

He placed His faith in the justice of God

Like the servant of Isaiah 50, Jesus put his trust in the vindication of the Lord. He knew that it time God would make known His approval of him and reveal His wrath upon His enemies.

who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; (1 Peter 2:22-23)

Because of these things He sustains the weary with a word of comfort

Jesus was trained by suffering to know how to help the Lord's suffering people. What He learned, he makes know to us that we too can overcome our weariness.

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

The Hebrew writer shows us that these experiences were intended by God to perfect Jesus for His role as our high priest:

For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:18)

Clearly we can see that Jesus is the one who fulfills Isaiah's prophecy with perfection!

A valuable lesson for Jesus' disciples

The call to be His disciple requires that we follow in His footsteps.

We must open our ears to the word of God.

We must be willing to experience the hostility of an unbelieving world.

We must be determined to remain faithful no matter the cost.

We must put our trust in the justice of God.

We must look to Jesus as our source of comfort.

No matter how hard life gets, here is one consoling truth. There is no suffering we experience that Jesus cannot understand and help us with it.

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, (Hebrews 5:7-9)

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has

sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Conclusion: And so Isaiah's prophecy helps our faith by showing us a preview of the Savior before He ever lived. Perhaps it was inconceivable to the Jews to think that anyone crowned as King of Israel would spend a moment suffering at the hands of His people. It is not the experience of kings to be persecuted by their subjects! They could easily relate to the glorious king; they could not relate to the suffering servant. Yet that is exactly what happened to Jesus. "He came to His own and His own received Him not."

Finally, the last words of Isaiah 50 remind us that a day of judgment is coming in which all will receive their just repayment. The Servant speaks a word of encouragement to all of us who may "walk in the darkness" of suffering.

Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

But the servant also issues a warning to those who seek to "walk by their own light," that do their own will and escape the suffering of true righteousness:

Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with firebrands, walk in the light of your fire and among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand; and you will lie down in torment. (Isaiah 50:10-11)