

The Suffering Servant and the Chosen Fast

March 11, 2018

These chapters in Isaiah are rich in prophetic teaching—too much to cover in one message. So I have elected to focus on two passages only which, among them all, are instructive, poetic, and revealing the heart of God. The first has to do with a very clear and precise prophecy on the crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah and all that His suffering provides for us (Isaiah 53). The second has to do with fasting in a way that is powerful and moves the heart of God; fasting which is not religious at all, but from the heart (Isaiah 58).

I. Isaiah 53

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For 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. He 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. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But 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. All 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. He 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. By 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? His 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. 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. 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. 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. (Isa 53:1-12 NAU)**

- A. **A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief**—The passage in pink does not imply that Jesus was ugly or that He was unhappy. Why would the disciples be interested in His joy if He had none? These prophecies refer to the crucified Messiah who was beaten and abused beyond recognition. Yet, His abusers did not see this horror as their own work, but as God's rejection of Him and what He deserved.
- B. **He was crushed for our iniquities**—Note that the punishment phrases are largely in the passive sense: these things happened to Him. While the physical abuse occurred at the hands of humans, it was the Father Who delivered Him up to the cross. Redemption was the work of the Triune God pouring out the punishment and consequence of our sin upon Jesus. Note the use of propitiation in the NT: Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 2:17-18; I John 2:2 and 4:10.
- C. **Because He poured out Himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors**—Jesus was a willing participant in offering Himself up for the payment of our sins. Though He was innocent and numbered with transgressors, He, who knew no sin became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (see 2 Corinthians 5:21)

II. Isaiah 58

"Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet, And declare to My people their transgression And to the house of Jacob their sins. "Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways, As a nation that has done righteousness And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They ask Me for just decisions, They delight in the nearness of God. 'Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, And drive hard all your workers. "Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high. "Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD? "Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke? "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? "Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. "Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, And if you give yourself to the hungry And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness And your gloom will become like midday. "And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. "Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the streets in which to dwell. "If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your own pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, And honor it, desisting from your own ways, From seeking your own pleasure And speaking your own word, Then you will take delight in the LORD, And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (Isa 58:1-14 NAU)