

I. INTRODUCTION

In Old Testament times, the Israelites were looking forward to a Messiah who would come in glory, establish an earthly kingdom, and lead the Israeli nation to greatness. But God's ways are higher than man's ways. The Messiah indeed shall come (speaking from Isaiah's time), but not in the form according to the popular notion. He shall be the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). When Isaiah preached this, the people rejected his message. Hence Isaiah's lament in v. 1. When Jesus finally came, he fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy exactly. Jesus had to remind the people, "My kingdom is not of this world." The whole life of Jesus—what He was like, what He did—is amazingly summarized in this chapter, which was written many hundreds of years before the birth of our Lord. This is an important example of the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.

II. BIBLE READING

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 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. 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. 4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 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. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 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. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. 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. 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. 10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. 11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. 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. (NIV)

III. DISCUSSION

We will try to compare the Suffering Servant as described by Isaiah with the life of Jesus Christ, to see if Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled.

A. The Birth And Early Years (v. 2)

1. How was the Servant's birth and early years described? (v. 2) What does it mean?
2. Relating to the birth and early years of Jesus Christ, how was the prophecy fulfilled?

B. His Purpose In Coming (vv. 3-6)

1. How was the Servant received by His people? (v. 3) How was this fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
2. How was the Servant's mission on earth described? (vv. 4-6) How was this fulfilled exactly by Jesus? 3. Why did He have to suffer all these? (v. 6) In what way are we healed?
3. Why did He have to suffer all these? (v. 6)
4. Let us imagine for a moment that Jesus never came to earth. You know there is a God, and that you have sinned and transgressed His laws. Would you want to get right with God? If so, how would you go about it?
5. Discuss why each of the above is inadequate to resolve the problem of sin. 1) The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Whatever sacrifices we try to make falls far short of that. It is like trying to repay a million-peso debt with five pesos. 2) No matter how good a life a person tries to live, if he rates himself on a scale of 0 to 100% (100% being perfect), he will have to admit that he can never reach 100%. But God is holy and perfect, and His standard is 100%. So nobody reaches God's standard. Verse 6 says "All we, like sheep, have gone astray..." 3) Good works are pleasing to God if they are the fruits of a Christian's life. But good works by themselves cannot earn our salvation (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

C. His Trial, Execution And Burial (vv. 7-9)

1. How was the Servant to be tried and executed? (vv. 7, 8)
2. How was it fulfilled point by point by Jesus' trial and execution?
3. How was the Servant's burial described? (v. 9)
4. How was it fulfilled by Jesus?

D. Results Of His Suffering (vv. 10-12)

1. What were the results of the Servant's suffering? (vv. 1-12)
2. How was this fulfilled in Jesus Christ?

E. Summary

1. It is amazing how every detail in Isaiah's description of the Suffering Servant was fulfilled several hundred of years later in the life of Jesus Christ. How has this fulfilment of Biblical prophecy affected your attitude towards the reliability of God's Word?
2. How has Jesus Christ's suffering affected you? How do you respond to God's love through Jesus Christ?
3. Reflection: Was it I who caused Jesus to suffer? Am I still causing Him to suffer?