

JEHOVAH'S SUFFERING SERVANT

– JULY 9TH. – ISAIAH 52:13; 53:1-12. –

"Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

IN THIS STUDY we have a Divinely drawn portrait of the experiences which God foreordained should come upon the One whom He has promised shall ultimately be the great Messiah of glory who will exalt the nation of Israel and through it pour blessings upon all the families of the earth. Thus it is written, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Much of the prophecy of this study has already been fulfilled, but not all of it – the glorious features are yet to come, and we believe are nigh, even at the door.

These prophecies were written nearly seven hundred years before our Christian Era. They had their most striking fulfilment in the personal experiences of Jesus. However, it should not be forgotten that a faithful handful, a "little flock," the followers of Jesus, have walked in His steps during the nineteen centuries of this Age; they have followed Him through evil report and through good report; they have suffered with Him, and the reproaches of those who reproached Him have fallen upon them; and when the hour of glorious revelation, the Kingdom power, shall come, these will be with their Redeemer and share His throne and glory, and, as His Bride, share His name. "This is the name whereby she shall be called, Our righteousness of Jehovah." – Jer. 23:6; 33:16.

The key to the understanding of the long delay in the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom is found in the fact that the Church is a very part of Him, members of His Body. Had it not been the Divine intention to gather an "elect" few from Israel and from all nations to be the Bride of Messiah, and a sharer in His Kingdom, there would have been no need of the long delay between the sufferings of

Jesus and the outpouring of the glorious blessings which His death secures.

Again it must be remembered that the elect Church is wholly different from the nominal church, as represented in its various systems. The true Church of God consists only of the saintly few who may be found inside and outside of all denominations of Christendom. "Gather My saints together unto Me, saith the Lord, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." (Psa. 50:5.) Of these St. Paul wrote, "The world knoweth us not even as it knew Him not." But the assurance comes – "The Lord knoweth them that are His." The completion of the selection and character-perfecting of this "little flock" will come – the end of the "sufferings of Christ" – and immediately the glory will follow, the glory of the Messianic Kingdom.

THE PROPHETIC SUMMARY

In the first three verses of our study, the entire work of Messiah, not only in its preparation, but also in its revelation in Kingly power, is set forth. It is applicable, specially, to the Head, but is applicable also to the members of His Body. A preferred translation reads: –

"Behold my Servant shall deal wisely; He shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high. As many were astonished in Thee; but His visage was so marred more than any man. For so shall He startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths to Him, for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they understand."

There are two reasons why the world and its great ones will be astonished when the Millennial Kingdom shall suddenly burst upon the world. They have heard such chimerical and unreasonable statements respecting Messiah's Kingdom, even from the people of God, that they will be taken completely by surprise when they shall behold the reality. Some have told them that Messiah's reign was

accomplished during the period of the Dark Ages, in the triumph of the Church of Rome. Others have told them that Messiah's reign is now in progress, that the various kingdoms of earth, at war and preparing for war, are branches of Messiah's Kingdom.

Still, others have claimed that the Kingdom is to be an evolutionary matter brought about by moral reforms. When it shall be ushered in, following a great social revolution, it will be so much more majestically grand than anything dreamed of that every mouth shall be stopped and, as the Lord through the Prophet declares, that Kingdom of Messiah shall be the "desire of all nations." – Hag. 2:6,7.

AS SEEN BY HIS FOLLOWERS

Chapter 53, verses 1 to 6, picture the experiences of Jesus as viewed from the standpoint of the disciple of His day and since. Following their commission, they have told the wonderful story of the Savior's love and sacrifice, even unto death. But how few have heard, in the true sense of hearing; how few have appreciated it; how few have seen in Jesus the Arm of Jehovah, stretched down for the relief of Adam and his race from sin and death! Only a handful, the saintly few, really and truly believe the message, for surely every true believer would not only accept the proffered share of the Redeemer's merit, but also the proffered share of His sufferings, that they might have a share also in the glory to follow. We read:

"Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and

with His stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Not understanding that there must be a sacrifice for sin before the Divine blessing could come, the Jews looked for a mighty hero, a conquering general, to deliver them from the Roman yoke. Hence their disappointment in finding Jesus a gentle teacher, full of tenderness and compassion, laying down his life for the "sheep." He, indeed, had the blessing of purity and Godlikeness, but this was not the blessing of their dreams and hopes. The experiences endured by Jesus were misunderstood by many – misunderstood even by His disciples, one of whom said, "Far be it from thee, Lord; this thing shall not happen unto Thee" – his crucifixion; and when the crucifixion did come, it was accepted by the many as an evidence of Divine disapproval, as an evidence that Jehovah repudiated the Servant and the service.

A MORE MATURED VIEW

Verses seven to nine portray the matured view of Jesus' disciples as they began to consider more carefully and to understand more fully their Master and His work. As with the Head, so with many members of His Body, the Church; only after their decease is their real spirit understood and appreciated from the Divine standpoint.

We read: "He was oppressed, yet He humbled Himself **[R4832 : page 173]** and opened not His mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, He opened not His mouth. By judicial oppression he was taken away; and as for His future offspring, how could there be any, for He was cut off out of the land of the living! For the transgression of my people was He stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; of all He had done, there was no violence, neither was any deceit found in His mouth."

How could one dying as Jesus died, without natural children and as a felon, ever expect to become the great Messiah, of whom it is written, "He shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, a Mighty One, the Prince of Peace, and the Father [or Giver] of everlasting life!" How could the crucified Jesus give life to any one?

The Scriptures explain that in the Divine arrangement He purchases Adam and Adam's race, condemned through Adam's fall. Being raised from the dead by the Heavenly Father, Jehovah, Jesus is now the glorified One, merely waiting for the completion of the Church which is His Body, that He may take to Himself His great power and reign, as the Messiah of Israel and of the world. During the Messianic reign, opportunity will be given to Adam and all of his race to be resurrected or uplifted out of sin and death conditions – up, up, up to full human perfection and everlasting life – to all that was lost in Adam, to all that was redeemed through the cross. This is explained in the following verse: "He shall see His seed" – His progeny; so many of Adam's progeny as will obey Him He will adopt as His children, giving them life everlasting on the plane of human perfection.

THE PROPHETIC EXPLANATION

Verses ten and eleven give the following prophetic explanation of the experiences of Jesus: "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief. Thou shalt make His soul an Offering for sin; He shall see His seed. He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, when He shall bear their iniquities."

THE REDEEMER'S EXALTATION

The last verse of our study points out to us that the exaltation of Jesus in His resurrection, far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named, was as a reward for His faithfulness in doing the will of the Father, according to His covenant of sacrifice.

Jehovah also tells us that this great reward Jesus will share with His Church, His Bride, "the strong, the overcomers." Finally the Prophet summarizes the Master's work as respects the present Age:

"Because of this will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bare the sin of many and accomplished intercession for the transgressors."

