

“The point emphasised is that sorrow and grief were the very characteristics of the Servant of Jehovah, ‘the tokens we know Him by’” (Baron 1922: 79).

“Suffering was not something that he was just peripherally acquainted with on the rare occasion; it was a pivotal factor in his life. When people mentioned this Servant, people would automatically connect him to this time of suffering” (Smith 2009: 447).

“*Man of sorrows*: sorrows makes a ‘domino’ link between verses 3 and 4, and it is only in 4 that we discover that his sorrow and suffering arose not from a sickly constitution but because he took our sorrows as his own” (Motyer 1999: 377).

“*Esteemed* is an ‘accounting’ word, a reckoning up of value. When all that the human eye saw and the human mind apprehended was added up the result was zero” (Motyer 1993: 429).

“I have known personally most amiable, and as men, lovable characters among the Jews; but immediately the name ‘Jesus’ was mentioned, a change came over their countenances, and they would fall into a passion of anger. In the course of my missionary experiences these past thirty-five or forty years, how often has it been my lot to witness some of my people almost mad with rage—clenching their fists, gnashing their teeth, and spitting on the ground at the very mention of the Name which to the believer ‘is as ointment poured forth!’” (Baron 1922: 75).

“But, as we read these sad and solemn words, ‘He was despised, and we esteemed Him not,’ may we not pause for a moment to ask ourselves if this is not true also in professing Christendom to-day?” (Baron 1922: 81).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Why is God’s way of working so difficult for people to accept?

Why is Jesus supremely valuable? How is Jesus beautiful?

Does your life reflect a high Jesus-esteem or a low Jesus-esteem?

ISAIAH 53:1-3: THE REJECTION OF THE SERVANT

STRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 49-55

Servant song (#2)	49:1–13
Salvation for Zion	49:14–50:3
Servant song (#3)	50:4–11
Salvation for Zion	51:1–52:12
Servant song (#4)	52:13–53:12
Salvation for Zion	54:1–17
Conclusion	55:1–13 (adapted from Smith 2009: 337)

OUTLINE OF THE FOURTH SERVANT SONG (52:13-53:12)

- A The **paradox** of the servant (52:13-15)
 - B The **rejection** of the servant (53:1-3)
 - C The **sacrifice** of the servant (53:4-6)
 - B The **death** of the servant (53:7-9)
- A The **resurrection** of the servant (53:10-12)

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 53:1-3

- Rhetorical Questions (v. 1)
- The Humble Origin of the Servant (v. 2)
- The Dismissive Response to the Servant (v. 3)

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

“This fourth Song [52:13–53:12] is the most elaborate and poignant of them all. It is the jewel in the crown of Isaiah’s theology, the focal point of his vision” (Webb 1996: 209).

“Isaiah makes it explicit that this Servant is “the arm of the LORD” that had been promised (53:1). But that report is clearly disbelieved. Why? Three reasons are given. (1) He comes onto the scene in a quiet and unassuming way (53:2). (2) He has no extraordinary beauty or attractiveness to draw people to him; his “appearance” was quite ordinary. (3) Finally, he is rejected because he takes on himself the pain and “suffering” of the world (53:3)” (Oswalt 2003: 584).

“We are transplanted in these verses, by the spirit of prophecy, into that future solemn day of Israel’s history which is described in the last chapters of Zechariah—when the spirit of grace and supplications shall be poured upon them, and their eyes shall be opened to look upon Him whom they have pierced. It is then, in the great mourning and weeping which are there described, that they shall break out with this plaintive hymn, which is musical in its sadness and betrays the agony of a broken heart and contrite spirit” (Baron 1922: 67).

53:1 – RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

“The prophet speaks for those who later came to faith” (Motyer 1993: 427).

“In 51:19 the arm was called to awake; 52:6 pledged the Lord’s own presence; 52:8 foresaw the Lord visibly coming to Zion; 52:10 noted that the arm had been bared in saving action. Now at last the arm has come, not simply a person behind and through whom the Lord’s power is at work, nor just one signally (even uniquely) upheld by the Lord’s power, but ‘the Arm’ himself, the Lord come to save” (Motyer 1993: 427).

“The two astonishing events of 52:14–15—the appalling suffering of God’s own wise Servant who deserved none of it and the subsequent elevation of one so dishonored by men—would in fact produce incredulity in many hearing the report of these things. God’s way of doing things often does not seem to make sense to men (cf. 55:8–9; 1 Cor 1:18–31). The cross is, however, where God’s power resides” (Grogan 1986: 302).

“Who could have believed that when the arm of the Lord was bared to deliver his people (52:10) it would look like this?” (Oswalt 1998: 381).

“The questions anticipate a less-than-ideal reception for God’s servant. Were someone to answer the questions in light of what follows, the answers would be something like this: (1) ‘Very few people’ and (2) ‘The Lord’s arm (i.e., his work) was revealed widely through the servant, but few believed the Lord would work in that way’ (Beyer 2007: 206).

This verse is quoted in John 12:38 and Romans 10:16. Isaiah knew that many Israelites would not accept the Servant. John and Paul quote this verse to explain why many rejected Jesus.

53:2 – THE HUMBLE ORIGIN OF THE SERVANT

“This kind of symbolism suggests that this person was not born in a palace of a world empire with all the luxuries that are usually afforded to persons of royalty. In spite of these lowly images, the Servant grew up “before him” (before God, referring back to 53:1), which suggests a close relationship to God or at least God’s careful attention to what was happening in his life” (Smith 2009: 445).

“The Christian thinks inevitably of Jesus Christ: a baby born in the back-stable of a village inn. This would shake the Roman Empire? A man quietly coming to the great preacher of the day and asking to be baptized. This is the advent of the man who would be heralded as the Savior of the world? No, this is not what we think the arm of the Lord should look like” (Oswalt 1998: 382).

“As a result, our eyes flicker across him in a crowd and we do not even see him. His splendor is not on the surface, and those who have no inclination to look beyond the surface will never even see him, much less pay him any attention” (Oswalt 1998: 383).

“The Servant has come to take away the sins of the world, but no one pays any attention to him” (Oswalt 2003: 585).

53:3 – THE DISMISSIVE RESPONSE TO THE SERVANT

“Verse 3 develops the thought of v.2, for the onlookers moved from failure to despising and rejection, refusing even to look at him (cf. perhaps Num 21:8–9; John 3:14–16)” (Grogan 1986: 302).