

THE HISTORY OF THE SERVANT'S IDENTITY ISAIAH

52:13-53:10

Paul J. Bucknell

The problem of the Servant's identity is critically important to one's interpretation and application of the four Servant Songs (Isaiah 42:1-4(7); 49:1-6; 50:4-9(11); 52:13-53:12). Lindblom says there is no need for such a quest, identifying the Servant as a mere literary tool.

Rather than using collective and individual interpretations as major groupings, non-Messianic and Messianic interpretations will be used to present the numerous theories. This has two advantages: 1) the theories holding the Servant as both a collective and individual body will be easily placed; and 2) the main focus will be on distinguishing two broader interpretative schools. To be specific, some scholars come into this discussion with the premise that Israel's religion can wholly be explained in terms of its social development, totally ignoring God's revelation.

I. NON-MESSIANIC INTERPRETATIONS

The many and varied non-Messianic interpretations have one similar theme running throughout them; the Servant's identity has everything to do with Israel's past or the then present society. The focus is on what has happened, and maybe, what will repeat itself at a future time. The righteous suffered; they will suffer again.

COLLECTIVE INTERPRETATIONS

The people of Israel before 400 BC are seen as looking forward to a Messianic king. Some authors among them have not doubted this, but they have distinguished this hope from the interpretation of the Suffering Servant. For them, the Old Testament itself is unclear as to how they consolidated these two views together. The Jews never seem to have thought of the Servant Songs in relation to the Messiah. Dahlman says that even before the rise of the Messianic interpretation of the Songs by the Christian community, the Servant was identified with the community of the righteous.¹ The fate of those who taught the Law was seen described by the suffering portrayed in Isaiah 53.

Along with that collective view is the identification of the Servant with Israel as a nation. Origen gives us the first indication for this. Origen and Jewish opponents argued as to whether the Servant represented the whole nation or the individual.² Until the great medieval commentators, there is not any further support for this view, but since the 12th century the Jewish interpretation has been standard including men like Rashi (d. 1105) and Joseph ben Nathan. This view became standard among the Jews not only because there are collective expressions for the Servant but also to preserve their culture from the Christian Messianic interpretation.

From the early 18th century, we begin to see a different collective view which pictured the suffering as “the wide dispersion and persecution of the Jews up to and including the times in which several rabbis happened to be living.”³ This differs widely from the Christians who held that the suffering described the Babylonian captivity of the 6th century BC, resulting in a completely different identity of the Servant.

¹North. pp. 6-7.

²North. pp. 17.

³North. p. 19.

In 1787 H. Stephani noted the Servant was the Servant Jacob. Two years later Doderlein in his third edition of his commentary espoused the Servant's identity in Isaiah 49:1 and 52:13-53:12 personifying the entire Jewish people. Gesenius and Welhausen generally followed the slightly modified form of C.C. Schuster, who in 1797 began using the phraseology 'corporate personality.' They agreed that the Servant in these songs was the allegory of collective Israel's fortunes.

Two more very similar collective theories were the 'Idealistic Israel' and the 'Pious Minority' interpretations. J.C.R. Eckermann, in 1790, first advocated that the Servant was the idealistic Israel, emphasizing the difference between the state and the state's citizens. The 'He' is the state; the 'we' portion of the songs were the people. W. Votke in 1835, Ewald in 1840, and later Beck held to this view, though again slightly modified.

The 'Pious Minority,' similar to the 'Idealistic Israel' theory, did not strongly stress the two sides. H. Pauluss in 1792 first identified the Servant to be the better portion of Israel in exile who suffered in judgment on account of the bad portion. Later, the August Knobel Commentary brought many supporters to this view.

This view, as well as those that identified the Servant with the 'Order of the Prophets' developed by Rosenmullor or the 'Order of the Priests,' are all a modification of the Jewish 'Righteous Community' theory. The historical outlook naturally differs, and yet, there remains the faithful group's identification within Israel's society who suffered unjustly with the Servant.

Many of the collective theories of the later 19th and 20th centuries are just developments of former theories. They, such as the Tammuz cult, focus more on Israel's socialization process. Those that espouse such theories divide up the said authorship of the four Songs and suggest a form of oscillation between the collective and individualistic views of the

Servant's identity. Some say they include a Messianic note developed from the second Song. In reality, they are not predictions of a future situation but an expression of hope for the future or a pattern that will again develop.

A.S. Peake and A. Lods held that the Servant stood for the empirical Israel as in contrast to the ideal Israel. Following the line of Stephani and Schuster, they held the 'my' found in the fourth song represented a minority who was moved to consciousness of the mission of Israel from the second Song.

While Lindblom says the Servant is an allegorical figure and therefore regards details or precise descriptions of the Servant irrelevant, E. Konig and I. Matthews regard the Servant to be the Israel within Israel. B. Eerdmans believes the Servant is to be identified with Chasidism, being found before Deutero-Isaiah's time.

Several authors such as Torrey, H. Wheeler Robinson, and O. Eissfeldt held that the Servant was either the nation Israel or the representatives or leaders of Israel, depending on the song and not necessarily in agreement. The concept of the Servant could not solely be identified with the collective or with the individual. Both ideas were present, and yet the overall tone was the collective view.

INDIVIDUALISTIC INTERPRETATIONS

There are numerous individualistic theories which identify the Servant as a person rather than a group and yet hold that he is more of a historical figure than a person of the future. Before Duhm's famous commentary came in 1892, there were already many ideas as to who the Servant was in the Servant Songs. A chart helps clarify the many views. The left column are the suggested historical Servant figures.

DEUTERO-ISAIAH:	*Stahelin;	½Sellin, Mowinckle, Bogrich
HEZEKIAH:	: #Rabbi Passai;	*Bahendt, Konynenburg
ISAIAH	: #Stoudlin	
JEHOIACIM	: ½Sellin, Burrows, Snaith, Bohl, Snaith	
JEREMIAH	: #Saadyah Gaon;	*Bunsen, Grotius; ½Blank
JOB	: #Rabbi Eliezer	
JOSIAH	: #Abarbaul	
MOSES	:	½Sellin, Freud
NEHEMIAH	: #Weismann	
UNKNOWN	: *Scherkel;	½Duhm, Kittel, Rudolph, Oesterley
UZZIAH	:	½K. Deitze
ZERUBBABEL	: *S. Sharpe;	½Sellin
(# Pre-Duhm Jewish * Pre-Duhm Christian ½ Post-Duhm)		

This list is incomplete, in both the proposals for whom the Servant is identified with and in the adherents of a certain theory. Notice how Sellin's name is listed several times. He continually changed his mind. This is different from some commentators who feel the Servant is at best an idealized form drawn from several influential characters, or from having different individuals linked up to the different Songs such as Nyberg.

In 1892 Duhm rewrote his commentary on Isaiah. By suggesting there were three not two authors of Isaiah, he stimulated the development of many theories. The British scholars never espoused these individual theories, but those from Germany were, although they never could agree as to who the original portrait of the Servant was.

In 1921, Mowinckel developed the autobiographical individual interpretation. He believed Deutero-Isaiah wrote about himself as the Servant. His followers suggested other individuals who might have written about how Deutero-Isaiah died in Isaiah 53. Mowinckel himself abandoned his position for one which "...he is still prepared to concede that the Servant may be a purely future figure 'whom the prophet saw and heard in his inspired imagination.'"⁴

⁴North. p. 222.

The Servant of Yahweh is not a historical individual. He is described in more than human terms. Nor is he a mythological figure, like Tammuz in Babylonian religion; though it may be that there are several similarities between Tammuz and the Suffering Servant. He is not Israel, nor a part of Israel, nor the 'ideal Israel'; he is an individual person who has not yet appeared, but belongs to the future. He represents a plan beyond all historical facts. He is a Messianic figure,... a soteriological rather than a political Messianic figure.⁵

II. MESSIANIC THEORIES

The Messianic interpretation of the Servant's identity has always been popular, but admittedly there are also numerous opinions even with this general heading. These interpretations hold that the Servant represented a group or person of the future.

The Jews' earliest testimony, in the Targum of Jonathon ben Uzziel edited in the third century AD, saw a connection between Christ and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 at the beginning of the Christian era. Jonathon himself, however, lived in the century before the coming of Jesus. The evidence, however, for any case is scanty. The Jews had no problem with a Davidic Messiah, but the connection between the two, the Servant and the Messiah, was not made until Jesus Christ brought the two concepts together in his person as propagated by the Christians.

Later on, in the medieval age, several Jewish commentators suggested that the Servant discussed, starting in Isaiah 52:13, was more exalted than Moses and higher than Abraham, but in the end, they would say the Servant Messiah was only an allegory. Following this, the development of two Messiahs came about. Each faced a hard part in

⁵North. p. 41.

an important role in Israel's history. Hoshua Segre in 1791 finally divided the Servant Songs, assuming chapter 52 stood for one Messiah and chapter 53 represented Israel.⁶

This alerts us to another point of tension in the identification of the Servant. Was the Servant Israel, as Isaiah 49:3 indicates, or an individual as chapter 53 suggests? North says, "Any simple identification of the Servant with Israel is out of the question today."⁷ It is impossible to believe Deutero-Isaiah believed Israel's exile sufferings were innocent vicarious sufferings. Rowley, however, with others believe there is a fluidity of thought between Israel and an individual found in the person Jesus Christ.⁸

J. Fischer began to suggest the development of different Servants, although not independent authors or series, finding a unique fulfillment of Christ, though not consciously predicting Christ's death and life. J. Van der Plaeg simply crosses out the 'Israel' in Isaiah 49:3 simply saying the individual interpretation of the Servant does not allow it!

Delitzsch supported the pyramid theory, which was first developed by D. Hahn. There was a progress beginning with Israel, narrowing down to the remnant and then focussing in on the Redeemer as Servant himself. North believes in a simple identification of the Servant with Jesus the Messiah.

Several views have 'so-called' Messianic elements, which are not truly Messianic in the traditional sense. For example, Gressmann abandoned his earlier mythological view and later held to a highly speculative form of Messianic theory while retaining myth coloring. The Songs do not represent the past but the future, though not prefiguring the historical

⁶North. p. 13.

⁷Rowley. p. 50.

⁸Rowley. p. 51.

Christ. He suggested this was a prophetic, not political, Messiah; he is an ideal figure, not a real predicted figure.

Ivan Engell does not identify the Servant with a royal figure or with a substitute for the god in the Tammuz cult, but he is the Messiah depicted in these categories. Especially when the Servant is an individual, he is a figure for the future. He is not Jesus Christ but lives in the Davidic tradition.

A. Bentzer holds to the autobiographical theory from Mowinckel with a special emphasis on the second Moses. The Servant actually died, and yet, holds some Messianic element like Engell would suggest on the 'rising god.'

This is significantly different from the 'historic-Messianic' view which North has labeled R. Kittel's position, elaborated by W. Rudolf in W. Germany and W.O.F. Oesterley in the UK. The anonymous yet contemporary figure the author writes about is the Messiah. Through the Songs we see the successive stages of his fortune. His mission and task is so broad only one term in the Bible fits it, that is, the Messiah. Oesterley believes this real person, though unknown, was so believed by the author to be the Messiah that although the Servant die, "he was convinced that the "Servant" would rise from death to complete his work..."⁹

The traditional Christian view strongly identified the Servant with Jesus Christ right down to the last quarter of the 18th century with few questioning it. Roman Catholics, except for a few, similarly upheld this view. The close resemblance of the Songs to Jesus' experience and the abundant confirmation of the New Testament writers that saw the Lord Jesus as the Suffering Servant far outweigh the numerous theories which carry a

⁹North. p. 88.

strong bias against prophetic prediction. Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mat 20:28).

ANALYSIS OF ISAIAH 52:13-53:12

The well-structured Song of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 strongly and cleverly develops God's seriousness regarding the salvation of man. It is a delightful task to speculate its subtle and potent meaning. The many interpretations given in the former section all illustrate that, though the identity of the Servant is not a clear matter for many, yet the great Servant and his illustrative mission still stands as a shocking surprise.

From the outset, we should make it clear not all scholars hold 52:13-53:12 to be one unit. Many more are confused as to how this Song connects to its preceding and following passages. For many, these two problems are the same. Generally speaking, those not finding any clear reasons for placing the Songs where they are now positioned, do not find any significance in this passage. On the whole, they hold to non-Messianic interpretations, whether individual or collective, and their views are too vague to be helpful. In fact, John Eaton begins his thesis by saying the whole lack of any clear interpretation of chapters 40-55 in Isaiah brought him to develop a plausible interpretation since the beautiful nature of this poetry demands unity of thought and development.

Even though Lindblom believes the Servant is a fictitious person, yet he sees how this section can naturally fit into its context with themes of triumph and the exaltation and glory of Israel. He holds that this allegorical picture is precisely like the other Servant Songs, and thus, Israel through its miserable state will succeed because of the work of

expiation.¹⁰ E.J. Young also sees a smooth continuation within the context, however, with the understanding that the Servant is the Messiah. Chapter 52 portrays the church's great deliverance where the grace of God brings his people out of the bondage of sin. This Song fitly portrays the exaltation of the delivered and the Messiah.¹¹

Eaton with ample confidence says in this context of Zion's revival developed in chapter 52, "There should now be the fullest expression of the theme of the servant-leader, mediation of Yahweh's authority and salvation, a theme which has already taken an important place in chapters 42, 49, 50."¹²

Most scholars seem to analyze the interrelationships between the four Servant Songs more than the Songs in their individual contexts. This, again, is usually because they believe the Songs were written later in time, or at least by a different author than the neighboring passages and then inserted carefully. The best context for the fourth Song then, in their assessment, would be to have the four songs together.

Frankly speaking, these Songs do not have much sense if they were written by themselves separate from a larger context. The development within the Songs need to be in a time framework allowing for the gradual stages of the Songs. The four Songs develop stage by stage:

Song #1 (42:1-4) presents the Servant as one who would successfully complete Yahweh's mission.

Song #2 (49:1-7) presents the Servant again but with great difficulty in executing his work.

¹⁰Young. p. 334.

¹¹Eaton. p. 75.

¹²Lindblom. pp. 47-50.

Song #3 (50:4-9) the Servant spoke mentioning future suffering without explanation.

Song #4 (52:13-53:12) provides reasons for the Servant's "suffering and degradation."¹³

The Servant's mission, at first, is only assigned and briefly described. Only later on is the increasing darkness of the shadow brought out as the difficulties of executing his mission are gradually developed.

Blocher interestingly adds that the Songs appear in a definite literary context and are not considered isolated units.

The prophet composed the Songs separately from the rest of the second part of his book, though he intended them to be included. When he inserted them, he added connecting verses, where we find a continuation of the thought of the Songs as well as strong echoes of the context.¹⁴

He must see the fourth Song as naturally interlocking for there are no connecting verses for only this section.

Regarding the unity of the fourth Song itself, there is also division of opinions. This brings us right into the discussion of this Song's structure and the verses' interrelationships. Lindblom is surprised why so many scholars so lightly pass over the unity of this 'great' Song. He sees a parallelism. 52:13-15 introduces a person of most extreme misery but which is later exalted; this is similar to the thought in verses 53:2 onwards.¹⁵

C. Westermann also finds this fourth Song divided into two parts but in a different way. He "suggests that a report (53:1-11a) on the Servant is surrounded by both an

¹³Young. p. 335.

¹⁴Blocher. pp. 20-21.

¹⁵Lindblom. p. 37.

introductory (52:13-15) and concluding utterance (53:11b-12),” with the Servant’s humiliation and exaltation being the common theme.¹⁶

There are those who would separate 52:13-15 from Isaiah 53, but as we have seen there is a clear thematic continuation throughout this section. Problems do exist within the text, but they consist of a verse’s connection with the following verse rather than evidence for division.

Accepting the unity of this Song, then, two general approaches to the main structure of this Song will be introduced. Many modern scholars would interpret 53:1 as a continuation of 52:15 being spoken from the mouths of the Gentile kings. Blocher gives four reasons this is not best:

1. “Our report” could refer to the kings hypothesis but this word in the Bible is usually used of prophetic preaching (cf. 28:9; Je 49:14; Ob 1);
2. 53:1 depicts clear use of synonymous parallelism making 53:1 a unit in itself (‘believing report’ ‘been revealed’);
3. 53:1 is not concerned with amazement like 52:14-15; the point of 53:1 is that no one rightly understands;
4. Nowhere in 52:15 are the kings to have said a word. Hebrew, having no commas, commonly used introductory speaking formulas.¹⁷

In John 12:38 and Romans 10:16, Isaiah 53:1 is used to emphasize unbelief rather than surprise. The Septuagint translation supports this, “O Lord who hath believed this report of ours.” The “O Lord” emphasizes the beginning of a new subsection.

¹⁶Westermann. p. 255.

¹⁷Blocher. pp. 62-63.

Better than the above understanding, 52:13-15 forms a separate component of this Song. The highly compacted themes of exaltation and humiliation form an introductory statement and introduces themes to be further developed in the following verses. These obvious themes are rarely questioned.

Blocher's development seems more consistent in maintaining the Hebrew poetical parallelism. One literary device, we have mentioned in discussion of the Song's unity, is 'inclusive' which is a repetition of an opening theme (supreme success, total victory) in the closing verse. He also emphasizes the clear strophic arrangement with five stanzas of increasing length. The first stanza (52:13-15) is a kind of prologue, following Young's interpretation which summarizes the main themes. The second and third sections as well as the fourth and the fifth are in parallel with each other. Meanwhile, the second and fourth state certain facts; the third and fifth sections present the meaning of those facts (respectively speaking).¹⁸

Those familiar with this last Song are amazed at the numerous references and direct quotations of this passage found in the New Testament. The New Testament writers' certain interpretation of Isaiah 52:13-53:13 is a refreshing statement in the midst of all the debate as to the Servant's identity. Jesus began to bring life to this Song with his own servanthood. He was always doing his Father's will. He came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mat 20:28). Jesus Christ understood his role all too clearly; the great weeping on the night of his betrayal graphically depicts the Suffering Servant's awareness of his burdensome task.

¹⁸Blocher. pp. 60-61.

COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 52:13-15

52:13 Behold, my Servant will act wisely;

He will rise up, be lifted up, he will be exalted on high.

The verses preceding Isaiah 52:13 have just finished portraying the delivered Israel, a type for the church. In the midst of this exaltation, the reason for her success is mentioned: the wise actions of Yahweh's Servant. "Behold" rightly draws the attention away onto "My Servant." Isaiah commonly uses "behold" to bring attention to a surprising idea (Is 7:14, 42:1, 43:19) so "behold" is better than the milder "see."

"My Servant" is used numerous times in Isaiah including reference to Isaiah himself (20:3), reference to Israel (41:8, 45:4), and identification with the Servant of the Servant Songs (42:1-4; 49:1-7; 50:4-9 (implied); and 52:13-53:12). There is hardly any doubt that the Servant Songs are connected. The Servant is said to have a mission given to him. Accomplishing Yahweh's work, meanwhile, would be hard and costly.

The Servant, although a suffering Servant, is not at first presented in this light. Instead, the Servant is said to "act wisely." "To act wise" (lks) smoothly combines the two ideas of wise action and success (Jer 23:5). The above translation emphasizes the intelligent action which might be illustrated by Jesus refusing Satan's suggestion to rulership over the world and instead sets his eyes to Golgotha by which he shares his glory with the many (Mat 4:8-10).

Four Hebrew words, three of which are synonymous, are used to translate this next line, "He will be raised and lifted and highly exalted" (NIV). From the reader's vantage point, the strong emphasis is unclear until we see in the following verses and how far Yahweh's Servant first had to descend. Whether an accumulation of synonyms or successive stages of exaltation (commencement, continuation, and climax of exaltation), "the passage

certainly predicts the post-resurrection exaltation of Christ (Acts 2:33; 5:31; Phil 2:9) and, retrospectively, appropriately allows for the three stages in that exaltation.”¹⁹ Interestingly, the Septuagint and the Old Latin translations only use two words instead of the three.

52:14-15 Just as many were astonished at you,-
so his appearance was disfigured so to lose resemblance with man,
so his form was marred beyond recognition as a man.

Just so he will sprinkle many nations;
and kings will shut their mouths because of him;
for that which they were not told, they will see;
and that which they have not heard, they will understand.

A definite contrast is brought forward beginning in 52:14. Before the Servant was exalted; now the Servant is appalling. The “just as” clause produces an enigma with no easy solution. The difficulty arises when one tries to find the object which the comparison is against (just as.. even so...). Most agree that 14b,c form a parenthesis of thought explaining the reason for the astonishment. This leaves the first clause of 52:15 to be the object compared to. “Just as many were astonished at you...so he will sprinkle the many nations.” The Hebrew word for many (Mybr) appears at the end of each of these phrases. Just as many will be shocked by the Servant’s terrible treatment, so he (apparently the unclean one) will purify the many nations.

Of course, there other possibilities. Young favors making “so the kings shut their mouths” as the apodosis rather than the former phrase. Others have moved 52:14 b,c to another position which is a highly subjective matter. Although a reading in the Targum and Syriac version of the OT favors “him” in 52:14 rather than “you;” still the harder text, the you,

¹⁹Lindsey. p. 316.

seems more probable. Blocher explains the structure and enigmas pertaining to the author's amazement rather than a later mix-up on the text itself.²⁰ This is the way the author wrote it, i.e., almost in a stupor. But in fact, if this was really a parenthesis of thought and of explanation, this would demand a change of audience.

Still there are other interpretations of the author's main intention here. Many hold that the Hebrew word for "sprinkle" (hzn) can better be translated "startle." This might not change the protasis/apodasis form, but the meaning would be wholly different. That would suppose the meaning was "just as many were astonished.. even so many nations were startled." This seems rather clear in meaning and perhaps this is the reason the Septuagint and many commentators translate this word "to startle" (yaumasontai). However, this is not so straightforward. The other possible Hebrew readings (translation of startle) nowhere resembles the Masoretic text's "sprinkle." We need to look at the meaning of this word "to sprinkle" (hzn).

This "sprinkling with the fingers," which is used 24 times in the OT, is to be distinguished from another ceremony "sprinkling with the hand" (qrz). The usage is very clear. Never is "amazed" or "astonished" used in the Bible for this word. The Hi'phil verb form is used 20 times such as in 52:15. The liquid is always sprinkled by the finger and thus determining the amount. Blood is the most commonly used sprinkled liquid, but water and oil are also used.

The Arabic NAZA verb is found outside the Bible in contexts which it maybe applied to the springing or leaping of living beings caused by excessive emotions. Those preferring this "startle" usage also point out that "sprinkle" (hzn) takes an object with a preposition. Since there is not one here, they suggest the word "startle."

²⁰Blocher. p. 62.

In reality, the usage of “sprinkle” is not too awkward, and if it be so a little (meaning is strained also with “startle”), the convincing should come from the unusual usage. As to the missing preposition, Hebrew is never so regular to be considered very consistent. A missing preposition is allowable.

And lastly, having to do with the theme which runs throughout this Song, the “sprinkling” or “purifying” makes much more sense. The shock is present because of the extreme disfigurement (52:14), and the kings are in a stupor to see such an unclean creature to have anything to do with ceremony cleansing. Usually, with the usage of “sprinkle,” there is an emphasis on the liquid to be sprinkled, upon whom it is sprinkled, and the reason for its usage. Here however, the explanation will be held to later such as in 53:10 where the Servant serves as a guilt offering. These ideas are not only too developed to bring out in an introduction, but the missing liquid component, no doubt, creates a big sense of curiosity, especially as the one offering the blood was seemingly totally unclean.

So in accepting 52:14a and 15a as the protasis/apodosis clauses, 14 b,c are parenthetical explaining the word “astonished” or “shocked” in 14a. Both the Servant’s appearance and form are said to be unrecognizable, literally, “beyond that of man.” In this case, the comparison with men here imply that the Servant is, in fact, an individual rather than a corporate identity.

Just as the effect of the sprinkling was worldwide, we are not surprised to see this surprising influence reach the nation’s kings. This shock is directly related to this disfigured Servant whom they could not understand nor appreciate. The “My Son” of Psalm 2:7 is contrasted with the “My Servant” of Isaiah 52:13. In both places the Messiah is shown to be presented before the rulers of earthly kingdoms. This held true in a

limited way during his earthly life and through the influence of his disciples, and Jesus' death sentence, but nothing remains so clear as the predicted fact of every knee bowing when Christ returns (Phil 2:9-11). A true understanding of this weakly person shuts even the mouths of kings, both with his humiliation which brought salvation and his glorification.

COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 53:10-12

The fifth strophe, also the longest, explains the meaning of the esoteric language of the Servant in the previous three verses (the fourth stanza). Questions and situations needing explanation, such as the reason for slaughtering a helpless person and his said innocence, are found here. His life, manner of death, and burial all seem so crude and unjust when he had done no violence.

With the first explanation (third stanza), we see a partial explanation stressing only the soteriological result of the Servant's death. The meaning of His death—the righteous for the unjust themes—remain undeveloped so this fifth stanza follows in parallel and yet further develops the third stanza. The last stanza does resolve many of the inquirer's questions about the slaughtering of an innocent man. This stanza's pure length displays itself as the true climax of this great Song.

53:10 But the LORD was willing (pleased) to crush him, putting him to grief.

If he would make himself a guilt offering,
then he would see the seed,
he would have prolonged days,
and in his hand the will of the Lord will prosper.

Yahweh, the LORD, in vitally involved with this plan, being willing to crush “My Servant,” thus making him a guilt offering, resulting in “the seed,” even the faith of the many. Though dying, the Servant’s days continue on. Jesus the Christ did not stay dead but raised from the dead. Like the mother’s birth pangs, so the Messiah suffered, bringing about His own seed.

53:11 “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.”

What has earlier been stated is once again demonstrably worded. The Servant suffered, not because of His own sin—He bore their iniquities. This prophetic word plays a key role in the Christian’s understanding of this passage, integrating it deeply in their foundational theology. To further establish the Servant’s character, He is called the “Righteous One.” The multiple times this sense is stated clears the Servant from personal evil and points to His mission, to bear the sins of the wicked. “Justify the many” again is strong New Testament theological praise, not only characterizing freedom from their sin, having been established righteous by the Righteous One, but becoming the new community, “the many.”

53:12 “Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors” (ESV).

Again repeating at the end the pinnacle of the Servant’s task, bearing “the many” sins and making intercession for them. Since He is alive, He continues to represent them. “Divide a portion” speaks about how the Messiah shares His reward for His faithfulness with the very ones for whom He died. In New testament theology, this portioning out is connected with the believers being regarded on Judgment Day for their faithfulness,

even as The Servant faithfully fulfilled His mission. And so we see, in conclusion, the difficulties experienced to secure salvation for the sinful. They are not only forgiven, but in much grace, rewarded to share all the Servant has won.

Conclusion

The Servant was the Messiah. The multitude of similarities of the prophecies here are found fully fulfilled in the person, Jesus the Messiah. His difficult mission stood before Him, and yet, being faithful, endured the great pain. He bore their iniquities. and So, “the many,” as His seed, are little servants, dutifully carrying out the God’s will, and like their Master, the Servant, do not flinch at the hardships needed to be endured. The convincing character of Jesus the Christ in every way fulfills the general and specific prophecies, especially when dying on the cross, being the lamb sacrificed, brought faith and righteousness to those who believe on Jesus Christ.