The Person of the Servant Isaiah 53:103 Study 2

By Charles Feinberg

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This is the second message in a series on Isaiah 53 the gem of Old Testament prophecy. This second message on Isaiah 53 the gem of Old Testament prophecy given by Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg dean emeritus and professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada California. In our first study on Isaiah 53 actually 52:13 to 53:12.

In our first message we saw the beautiful setting of the jewel the place of Isaiah in the great canon of scripture the place of chapters 40 to 66 in that tremendous book and then even more particularly the place of Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12. Now we call come to the text itself Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12. This beautiful portion reads in this way. Behold my servant shall deal wisely he shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high like as many were astonished at thee, His visage was so marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men. So shall he sprinkle many nations’ kings shall shut their mouths at him for that which had not been told them shall they see? And that which they had not heard shall they understand. Who hath
believed our message and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed. For he grew up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground he hath no form nor comeliness no beauty.

And when we see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our grief and counted 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 everyone to his own way and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth as a lamb that is led to the slaughter and as a sheep that before it shearer is dumb. So he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation who among them 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.

And they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him. He hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed he
shall prolong his days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the 
travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. By the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant 
justify many? And he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the 
great and he shall divide the spoil with this wrong because he poured out his soul unto death and 
was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he bear the sin of many and made intercession for the 
transgressors.

When we come to this first strophe or stanza of the passage proper we could well entitle 
Isaiah 52:13 to 15 the preeminence of the servant this strophe is really a summary of the whole 
prophecy. It might be designated the presentation of the servant. It might be well at this point to 
indicate the speakers in the entire passage of 15 verses in verses 52:13 to 15 which are now 
before us. The speaker is unquestionably God. God the father the Lord God of Israel and then in 
the next ten verses Isaiah 53 one to ten. It is Israel the nation Israel in penitence, in their National 
Day of Atonement as we indicated in our first study. Then in the last two verses in Isaiah 53 11 
and 12 it is the Lord God speaking again. God the Father the God of Israel the God and Father of 
Our Lord Jesus Christ. If we were to put a caption over Verse 13 to indicate the subject matter 
Verse 13 could well be characterized by the exaltation of the sufferer. It begins with behold. 
Behold my servant shall deal wisely he shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high.

Just as in the first presentation of him in Isaiah 42:1 God calls upon the whole world of 
men to fix their intent gaze upon his servant and notice he calls him my servant. This is no self-
appointed servant of Jehovah. In Isaiah 42:1 it's the one God has chosen in whom God's desire 
was whom I uphold. So he deserves to be pointed out for the world seeks exultation by self-
promotion and self-aggrandizement. He was and is exalted because of self-humiliation. He that 
would be exalted must be abased and he who is abased shall be exalted the one who is lowly will
be exalted and the one who is proud and lofty will be brought low. Luke 18:14 we remember Philippians 2:5 to 11. That blessed one who was in the form of God thought it not a thing to be grasped or held onto but became obedient. All the way to the cross death and therefore God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at that name of Jesus every knee is to bow every tongue is to confess things in heaven on earth and under the earth, they're going to confess that Jesus Christ is lord to the glory of God the Father.

My friends the way to exaltation My God is by self-humiliation and self-abasement. So we read behold my servant shall deal wisely this deal wisely reminds us of Jeremiah 23:5. Seated there of the Messiah. God would raise up raise up a shepherd King. He too would deal wisely he would execute justice and righteousness in the land in his days Judah would be safe and Israel should dwell safely. This is the name whereby he shall be called The Lord Our Righteousness [inaudible]. He does deal wisely. He's going to accomplish what God set before him to do. No wonder he said I do all the things that are pleasing to the father, and as he prayed that wonderful high priestly prayer before he went back to the glory in John 17 verse four I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do. He was intent on no other avenue on no other errand no other activity on earth save that of bringing glory to the Lord God his father. John 8:29 John 17:4.

He's going to deal wisely in the very highest sense because he will use as has been said he will use the best means for the attainment of the highest end. And now look at the words that come in the verse at this point exalted lifted up very high. As has well been said a threefold cord is not easily broken. The literal of the Hebrew is he will rise. He will be still more exalted. He will stand high. Here we have all the Hebrew verbs that denote exaltation that indicate lifting up. It could well mean the commencement the course and the climax of the exaltation of this blessed
servant. One commentator sees here the Resurrection the Ascension and the session or the being seated at the right hand of God as the three steps in the fulfilment of the prophecy.

But there is more if we take the force of a passage like Psalm a hundred and ten one we read there the Lord, that's the father, said unto my Lord God the son sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Ephesians 1. He was lifted high above every principality and power and every name that's named in this age and that which is to come. God has made him head over all things to the church which is his body the fullness of him that filleth all in all this is part of his being exalted, lifted up and being very high when he had by himself says the writer of the Hebrews when he had by himself purged us from our sins. He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. And so the truth carries on not only in Hebrews 1 3 and 4 but in Hebrews 8:1 and Hebrews 10:12 and then Hebrews the twelfth chapter and the first and second verses.

Yes he is going to have all things placed under him First Corinthians 15 versus 24-28 especially verses 27 and 28. They will well repay your perusal and your close scrutiny and study upon them. God is going to subject all things under him and then he in wonderful harmony with the father and his glorious plan what does he do. He himself will deliver the kingdom over to the father the God Father Son and Holy Spirit may be all and in all. My friends, The best preparation for entering the valley of Christ's sorrows and contemplating them aright is to see his glorious exaltation on the other side. The ultimate goal of it all, that which he had in view. You will notice in the gospels it was the mount of transfiguration that came before Mount Calvary. We have to see what he had in view the exaltation as the ultimate purpose of God. We have to see that if we are going to understand aright all the agonies all the sorrows all the humiliation through which he went.
Yes. Hebrews tells us in the twelfth chapter who for the joy that was set before him. That joy set before him, mount of transfiguration gives us a picture of that who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, that's Calvary, endured the cross despised the shame. Now he is at the right hand of the father. We can well understand the exalted Christ better than the despised Christ. But it is by way of the despised Christ that we yet see him in a coming day as the exalted Christ. We're told that for generations two South American republics that of Argentina and Chile quarrel and at times fought over what over the location of a boundary and now on the peak of the Andes Mountains upon the boundary lines established between the two countries three miles above the level of the ocean a colossal statue of Christ.

World famous has been erected. That figure is twenty six feet high stands upon a granite hemisphere. Upon that pedestal is the Spanish inscription. The mountains will crumble to dust ere Argentines and Chileans break the peace which at the feet of Christ the Redeemer they have sworn to keep. But God's exaltation of the servant of Jehovah is far greater than man can ever approximate more than a statue on a granite hemisphere high above all principalities All powers all conception and imagination of man. So in verse one we have by way of recollection the exaltation of the sufferer. Now we come to verse 14 the disfiguring of the sufferer. Like as or just as many were astonished at thee parenthetically his visage his countenance his appearance was so marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men. Verses 14 and 15 are closely connected.

There should be no period after verse 14 as you go on to read so just as many were astonished so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at him. In direct proportion to his humiliation and suffering will be his exultation and glory. The portion in parenthesis in verse 14 explains the astonishment of the many. I'm reading from the 1911 version.
The American Standard Version. When the scripture here says many were astonished not all some did perceive the meaning of it. We read of an Anna we read of a simian and we read of a Mary we read of one who broke an alabaster box of ointment over the head of our Lord Jesus washed his feet those blessed feet with her tears and wiped those feet that were yet to go to Calvary.

She wiped them with her hair. Oh yes. It wasn't as if there were not any. But it was not many. Only a certain number. Many not all but many for some did perceive the meaning of this. They saw beyond the outward appearance God gave them insight. And so he says just as many were astonished. The word astonished as one of the forceful words of the Hebrew language it means to put into a desolate condition to startle to confuse to petrify actually to paralyze. Why were they so paralyzed in astonishment? Just as many were astonished at thee, at whom, at him. What person? The servant is going to be exalted lifted up. There was a time when he wasn't exalted and wasn't very high and wasn't lifted up. He was not he was despised at all and that's just as men were astonished at him then. Why? Explains the reason for that unusual reaction of theirs. His visage was marred more than any man. His face was so marred more than any man. The word marred is literally disfigurement. His visage his face was disfigurement itself more than any man.

Think of it more than any man indicates his form from that of the sons of men. It wasn't as it were in the same category. Now some take it that this was in the life of our Lord. But it's better to see it of the cross for in his earthly ministry even children were drawn to him. His face was not forbidding than. The face has been marred. It wasn't such at his birth and when it says more than any man, that's from that of a man not like that of a man or that of other human beings he didn't look human any more in his agony. Never was such sorrow in a human countenance.
It's interesting to notice that the earliest representations of the face of Christ in art picture him in the bloom of youth. They're suggesting the eternal youth of the word made flesh. It was not till the fourth century that the representations of the Savior began to show sorrow and austerity and anguish.

Christ being portrayed as the grief stricken sufferer because of this disfiguring my friends he is not less precious to us but rather more. Why. Because it was for us viewed so we adore him. We magnify Him. We love him all the more. We're told of a war worker during World War One visiting in a hospital in Chatto Tiare. She saw a lad whose face was just a mass of bandages and she said to him as gently as she could you poor poor boy. The soldier came back without hesitation and said don’t pity me ma'am pity my buddies over there who got hit where it ain't going to show. The lady asked amazed. Then you don't mind being disfigured? The soldier scoffed. He said did you say disfigured? I ain't disfigured, I'm decorated. My dear friends remember the blood the wounds the agony on the face of the Lord Jesus Christ are not to the believing heart they are not disfiguring they are the royal decorations, hear it.

They are the royal decorations which the King of Heaven bestows on the Lord of glory after he has met the enemy of our soul and won the fight. I wonder friends how often is it or when was it last that you truly gave a calm deliberate thought to how much Christ agonized on Calvary. You remember the sun had to hide its face. The sun was darkened and it's clear that God the Father couldn't bear the agony of it and had to do something that he had never done. From Eternity past till that moment. What did he do? He turned his face away from his well-beloved son for when Christ was made sin for us that one who knew no sin and God was making him our us making us by that wonderful work to have the righteousness of God in him that we might become the righteousness of God. God couldn't stand to see the agony. And so Christ
himself cried out My God my God these may not understand. But surely now doest understand my God my God why hast Thou forsaken that's we're not reading into the scriptural record anything God did forsake him.

God did turn away from so that you and I might never be forsaken that we might never be engulfed not merely with a darkness of nature but an eternal darkness, the absence of all life, perdition. Yes he was willing to suffer all of that just as many were astonished at thee; they are saying this to him Israel in penetrance they say oh how many were astonished at you. His visage they say was so marred more than any man and his form his whole appearance more than the sons of men. His whole body was completely wrecked. His body was entirely out of joint just as 22nd psalm says. His whole body was bearing the weight of our sins and all of it suspended there between heaven and earth heaven's sacrificial altar as thou fit for neither place. Oh what a terrible physical agony to bear in the body the whole body sustained just by those nails which they felt would keep him in place. He was not held their friends by the nails. It was love that held him there. He could at any moment have come down from the cross and dismissed the world.

But he wouldn't do so without winning the prize his well-beloved ones and so you see is for more than the sons of men. Why would he do it? We can't read this portion we dare not read his portion without asking why he did it. He did it for you and for me not enough to say he did it for the sins of the world of course. But in that time it was for you. And it was for me.

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