

STUDY GUIDE: THE SERVANT'S SUFFERING (ISAIAH 53:1-7)

This guide is designed to deepen understanding of the prophetic text of Isaiah 53 concerning the suffering Servant, drawing from scripture, lesson context, and pastoral commentary.

Review Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences, based on the provided source material.

1. What is the "prophetic past tense" and how does Isaiah use it?
2. According to Isaiah 53:2-3, what was the physical appearance and social reception of the Servant?
3. What are the two distinct types of a prophet's ministry as described in the lesson material?
4. How did people initially misinterpret the Servant's suffering, as stated in Isaiah 53:4?
5. Isaiah 53:5 outlines the purpose of the Servant's wounds. For whose benefit was He punished?
6. Describe the comparison made in Isaiah 53:6 between humanity and sheep.
7. How did the Servant respond to His oppression and affliction, according to Isaiah 53:7?
8. Pastor Ed Pope's notes refer to the "repentant remnant of Israel." What do they eventually acknowledge about the Messiah?
9. According to Pastor Ed Pope, what five types of wounds known to medical science did the Lord Jesus suffer?
10. The lesson material notes that the book of Isaiah can be divided into sections. What is the section beginning with chapter 40 commonly called?

Answer Key

1. The "prophetic past tense" is a literary device used by some Bible commentators to describe how Isaiah spoke of future events concerning Jesus as though they had already happened. Even though he was looking centuries into the future, this technique lent a sense of certainty and fulfillment to his prophecies.
2. The Servant's appearance is described as humble and unattractive. He is likened to "a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground," possessing "no form nor comeliness" and "no beauty that we should desire him." Consequently, He was despised and rejected by men.
3. The two types of prophetic ministry are forthtelling and foretelling. Forthtelling involves the prophet proclaiming God's message to their contemporary surroundings, while foretelling involves the prophet looking forward in time to declare God's plan for the future.
4. People misinterpreted the Servant's suffering as a punishment from God for His own sins. The verse states, "we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," before the text clarifies that He was actually bearing the griefs and sorrows of others.
5. The Servant was punished for the benefit of others. Isaiah 53:5 states, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." The chastisement He bore brought peace to others, and "with his stripes we are healed."
6. Isaiah 53:6 compares humanity to straying sheep, stating, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." This illustrates humanity's self-will and tendency to wander from God, for which the Lord laid the iniquity on the Servant.
7. The Servant responded with silence. Despite being oppressed and afflicted, "he opened not his mouth." He is compared to "a lamb to the slaughter" and "a sheep before her shearers is dumb," signifying His willing and uncomplaining submission.
8. The repentant remnant of Israel eventually acknowledges the truth about the Messiah's suffering. They confess that it was their griefs He bore and their sorrows He carried, realizing He was wounded for their transgressions and iniquities, not for His own sins.

9. The five types of wounds are: contusions (from blows by a rod), lacerations (from scourging), penetrating wounds (from the crown of thorns), perforating wounds (from the nails), and incised wounds (from the spear).
10. The section of Isaiah beginning with chapter 40 is commonly called "the book of comfort." These chapters contain some of the most significant prophecies concerning Jesus and the impact of His life and ministry.

Essay Questions for Deeper Reflection

1. Analyze the concept of the "prophetic past tense" in Isaiah. How does this literary device impact the reader's understanding of the prophecies concerning the suffering Servant?
2. Discuss the contrast between the Servant's humble, unattractive appearance (Isaiah 53:2-3) and the glory He reveals to God (Ephesians 1:18-23). How does this paradox shape the central message of the passage?
3. Examine the theme of substitutionary atonement in Isaiah 53:4-6. Using details from the scripture and the provided commentaries, explain how the Servant bears the griefs, sorrows, and iniquities of others.
4. Explore the significance of the Servant's silence as described in Isaiah 53:7. How does this chosen silence serve as a model and speak powerfully to believers, according to the lesson materials?
5. Synthesize the descriptions of the twofold nature of a prophet's ministry (forthtelling and foretelling). How does Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 53 exemplify both of these roles, impacting both his original audience and the entire world?

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition from Source Context
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Book of Comfort	A name commonly given to the section of the book of Isaiah beginning with chapter 40, which includes significant prophecies of Jesus.
Chastisement	The punishment laid upon the Servant, which brought peace to others ("the chastisement of our peace was upon him").
Comeliness	Physical attractiveness or beauty. The Servant is described as having "no form nor comeliness."
Esteem	To hold in high regard or appreciate. The people did not esteem the Servant; they "esteemed him not" and later "did esteem him stricken" by God.
Foretelling	A type of prophetic ministry in which the prophet looks forward in time to declare God's plan for the future.
Forthtelling	A type of prophetic ministry in which the prophet proclaims God's message to those of his own surroundings.
Iniquity	Sin or moral transgression. The Lord laid the iniquity of all people on the Servant.
Prophetic Past Tense	A term used by commentators to describe Isaiah's style of speaking about future events as though they had already happened.
Repentant Remnant	A group from Israel who, in the future, recall the Messiah's first advent, confess their initial disbelief, and acknowledge the true meaning of His suffering.
Root out of a dry ground	A metaphor for the Servant, signifying His growth in an unlikely and spiritually barren environment (Israel).
Tender Plant	A metaphor used to describe the Servant, suggesting His humble and delicate growth before God in a sinful world. Also described as a "sucker" pushing through caked ground.
Transgression	An act that goes against a law, rule, or code of conduct; a sin. The Servant was "wounded for our transgressions."

