

HE HATH POURED OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH

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Isaiah 52:13-53:12

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Isaiah 53:12

Isaiah foretold Christ’s coming, developing his prophecy according to three themes: Christ the King, Christ the Servant, and Christ the Conqueror.¹ Chapter 52:13-53:12 comprises the fourth “servant song.” It describes facts relating to the Servant’s suffering and the fruits of that suffering, and the last verse summarizes both the facts and the fruit.

God will “divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” This prophecy has been fulfilled, and continues to be. Name history’s “greatest” men, and Jesus Christ dwarfs them all in every respect—in fame, influence, power, wisdom, significance, duration—in everything. History’s conquerors plundered and spoiled their captives. But Christ and His people “shall inherit the earth,” and that by divine decree. His kingdom will be without war, without cruelty, and without sin or death. It will be everlasting, established upon righteousness, absolute and unthreatened.

What is affirmed of Christ can be asserted of no other: “every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10, 11). None other will bear the title, “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Rev. 17:14). Of no other did God say, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psa. 2:8). Christ alone, God has “appointed heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2). Among the “great,” Christ is supreme. Why? Four reasons are given.

1. HE HATH POURED OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH

This description expounds the drink offering (Gen. 35:14; Ex. 29:40, 41), which was poured out before the Lord. Throughout the Old Testament, the drink offering was a picture of Christ in His death. It echoes David describing Christ saying upon the cross, “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death” (Psa. 22:14, 15).

It is notable that Isaiah describes Christ as the one who did the pouring. This confirms Christ’s words: “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17, 18).

2. AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS

When Jesus was crucified, two thieves were crucified with Him. Mark explained this phenomenon, stating that “the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, and he was numbered

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with the transgressors” (Mark 15:27, 28). Isaiah cites this fact twice, having already foretold that

“he made his grave with the wicked” (53:9). In a larger sense, Christ entered into death in union with all of those who are justified by His death, which is shown when Isaiah reports, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities” (53:5).

The Apostle Paul asserted the same when he wrote, “for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21). The book of Hebrews also affirms, “forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (2:14, 15).

3. AND HE BARE THE SIN OF MANY

This summarizes Isaiah’s earlier statements: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . 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 (53:4-6).

4. AND HE MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS

His bearing of griefs, sorrows, transgressions and iniquities was not in vain, but it accomplished its purpose. That purpose was the justification of all those whose iniquity He bore: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (53:11). The prophet affirms that His bearing of their iniquities did indeed justify them. This successful undertaking was affirmed also when the prophet wrote, “by his stripes we are healed” (53:5).

Again, it was confirmed when he wrote, “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 his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (53:10, 11).

Perceiving all of this, the Apostle Peter wrote of Christ, saying, “when he was reviled, [he] reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (I Pet. 2:23, 24).

¹This observation is made by J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL, 1993, p. 13.