

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD IN ISAIAH

Isaiah 53 is one of the best known predictions of Christ in the Old Testament, and one of the chapters most frequently quoted in the New Testament. Actually, the passage begins with chapter 52:13. As one reads the last three verses of chapter 52 and the whole of chapter 53, one is repeatedly impressed with its clear statements of substitutionary atonement. It describes One who "bears the sin of many," One who lives a singularly faultless life and nevertheless suffers greatly, One who accomplishes something that will last for all eternity. Phrase after phrase fits precisely with our understanding of the work that Jesus Christ performed on the cross.

It is noticeable that the passage begins with the words: "Behold, my servant" (52:12), and that its next to last verse includes the statement: "My righteous servant shall justify many" (53:11). Christians have no doubt that the One who is here described as God's righteous servant is indeed the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, this is not the first passage dealing with the Servant of the Lord. In fact, as we shall note later, it is the climax of a series of passages. Many Jewish interpreters of Isaiah 53 seek to deny its relevance to the Lord Jesus Christ by insisting that the one who is described as "the Servant of the Lord" is really the nation of Israel. This contention cannot be lightly brushed aside for many of the related passages seem to state this as a fact. Thus Isaiah 41:8 includes the words: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen." Isaiah 44:1 says: "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant;

~~The problem~~

~~is a vital one for Christians. It is, of course, and still more, for Christian evangelism.~~