

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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A Slaughtered Sheep Will Divide The Spoils

by Dan Trygg

“Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. ⁸ By coercion and judgment He was taken away. As for His generation, who said that He was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of My people, to whom the stroke was due? ⁹ His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ But Yahweh was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief. If He would place Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the desire of Yahweh will prosper in His hand. ¹¹ Out from the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied. In the knowledge of Him, the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore, I will allot to Him the many, and He will divide the spoils of the strong, because He poured out His soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.” Isaiah 53:7-12

There are four “Servant songs” in the book of Isaiah (42:1-7; 49:1-8; 50:4-10; and 52:13-53:12), written some 700 years before Christ, that are descriptive of Him, His character, His purpose, what He would do, and what would be done to Him. Although some interpreters have tried to suggest that they could refer to Israel, if you examine them closely, it becomes clear that this does not fit. **All four of these passages have been quoted in the NT in reference to Jesus of Nazareth.** They are descriptive of Him, His person, His ministry, His suffering as our Substitute, His mission to institute a new covenant that would reach to all nations, and His vindication as One who would overcome death. **Jesus Himself said that “It is written that the Christ would suffer and rise again on the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Lk. 24:46).** The apostle Paul declared that the prophets had said that “the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23). **These Servant songs provide a glimpse into the suffering and vindication of the Servant of God, fulfilled in Jesus Christ.**

In Isaiah 42:1-7, the Servant is One in whom Yahweh delights, One chosen and supported by Him. God has put His Spirit upon Him, and He will bring forth justice (or, ‘judgment’) to the nations. He will not be a rabble-rouser, or noisy agitator, but would speak with gentleness among the fragile and broken. He will not give up until He has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands will eagerly await His instructions. Yahweh has called Him, and will appoint Him to be a covenant to the people, and a light to the nations.

In 49:1-8, we find that the Servant had been called from His mother’s womb, and had been protected and hidden, until the right time. God had made His mouth like a sharp sword, and this Servant was like a carefully prepared arrow to be used at the proper time. In verse 2, **Yahweh says, “You are My Servant, Israel, in whom I will show My glory.”** This has caused some to think that Israel herself was the servant. When you look farther down, however, this Servant is being sent “to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him” (vs. 5). **The Servant is the “Israel” to save Israel.** What does Israel mean? It means “God strives” or “God contends”. This Servant is the “Wrestling of God” in whom Yahweh will show His glory, the One who will bring the nation back to serve Yahweh, and restore those whom God had preserved. But even *that* was not enough. **Yahweh also said that He would make the Servant to be a light to the nations, so that Yahweh’s salvation would reach to the ends of the earth. The Servant will be despised by the nation, but rulers, kings and princes will see, arise and bow down to Him because of Yahweh, who has chosen Him. Yahweh says, “At an appointed time of favor, I will answer You, and in a day of salvation (lit., ‘Yeshua’ = ‘Jesus’) I will help You. I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people to restore the land and to inherit the desolate places” (vs. 8).**

In 50:4-10, the Servant has the tongue of a disciple, to know how to sustain a weary person with what He says. Yahweh wakens Him morning by morning, and has given Him an alert and open ear to hear from Him. Thus, He did not turn aside from His instruction. He gave His back to those who struck Him, and His cheeks to those who pluck out His beard. He did not hide His face from being humiliated or spit upon. Because Yahweh helps Him, He will not be disgraced. “Therefore,” He says, “I have set My face like flint. And I know I will not be put to shame” (vs. 7). Because God, who vindicates Him, is near, He says, “Who can contend with Me?... Because Yahweh helps Me, who is the one who condemns Me? They will all wear out like a garment. The moth will eat them.” **He encourages others who revere Yahweh, and who obey the voice of the Servant, ...people who also walk in darkness, and seem to have no light..., let them also trust in the name of Yahweh, and rely on their God.**

Of the four Servant songs, the final one (52:13-53:12) is the most direct and descriptive. It is hard to ignore the direct references to arrest, unjust treatment, violent abuse, crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ultimate triumph of the Servant. It is *so* clear and direct that, for centuries, Jews no longer read this chapter in their synagogue services. They

have a calendar of weekly readings, but 17th century Jewish historian, Raphael Levi, admitted that, while this chapter used to be read in synagogues, it caused so many “arguments and great confusion” that rabbis decided to simply omit reading it in their religious services. **What does it say?**

It begins with the statement that *the Servant will have success, and will be high, lifted up and exalted* (52:12). Why? Just as people were appalled at the desolation of Israel, **He will be disfigured. His appearance and figure will be marred beyond recognition, “more than any other man”, **so that He would spatter or sprinkle many nations** (52:14). (To Jews of that time, “spatter” and “sprinkle” would remind them of cleansing with the blood of sacrifice.) Kings will shut their mouths at the report, when they realize what has happened (52:15). **“Who would believe it? To whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?”** What *is* this report (53:1)? What *is* the arm of Yahweh? What did He *do*?**

He grew up before Yahweh like a tender shoot, like a root out of dry ground (vs. 2). Out of nowhere this “root” will come up (the “root of Jesse” cf. Isa. 11:1,10). **He had no stately appearance or majesty that would attract people to Him.**

He was despised and forsaken by men. A man of sorrows (pain, suffering) **and knowing sickness** (torment, grief). Like one from whom people turn away their faces in abhorrence, **He was held in contempt and not valued** (vs. 3).

Nevertheless, our sicknesses/torments He lifted, and our sorrows/sufferings He carried. But onlookers thought He was struck, battered and afflicted by God (vs. 4). Yet, **He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our peace/well-being was upon Him.** By His wounds/stripes we become healed (vs. 5).

All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us turned aside to his own way. **Yahweh caused our sin to fall upon Him** (vs. 6).

He was oppressed and He was humiliated, but He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb is brought to slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers, He did not open His mouth (vs. 7).

By coercion and from judgment He was taken away (vs. 8). Who will consider His fate, that He was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of His people to whom the death-stroke was due?

His grave was assigned with the wicked, but He was with the wealthy in His death (Matt. 27:57-60), because He had done no violence, and there was no deceit or treachery in His mouth (vs. 9).

Yahweh wanted to crush HIM. Why? **If He would place Himself a guilt offering, He will see offspring** (seed – Jn. 12:24). **He will prolong His days, and the good will of Yahweh will succeed in His hands** (vs. 10).

He will see what was gained from the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By the knowledge of Him, the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify many (or, ‘make many righteous’), and their iniquities He will bear (vs. 11).

Therefore, I will allot to Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong, ...because He poured out His soul to death, and He was numbered with the transgressors. He carried the sins of many, and interceded for the transgressors (vs. 12).

When we take all four of these Servant Songs together, there is a strong prophetic picture that emerges.

Yahweh has called His Servant from the womb of His mother. He kept Him hidden away, until the right time. **God placed His Holy Spirit upon Him, and out of nowhere, He rose to prominence.** Yahweh’s plan would reveal His glory. His plan would extend salvation to the nations. **It was Yahweh’s good purpose for the Servant to take our sins and our sicknesses upon Himself. In order for that to happen, the Servant had to be willing to present Himself to be a guilt offering.** He had to be taught like a disciple and learn to listen to His Father. He had to learn to trust even when it was difficult, ...to trust in His Father even in days of darkness and difficulty. **When He had learned obedience through the things that He suffered, and was prepared for His life’s challenge** (Heb. 5:7-9). **He was ready to be the Lamb who would become the guilt offering on behalf of others.** He was willing to give His back to those who struck Him, and His cheeks to those who pulled out His beard. **He was ready to quietly face and endure the injustice, mistreatment and violence of those who were acting against Him.** He was willing to bear *their* sin, and *our* sin, and to even pour out His soul to death on our behalf. **He was despised and mistreated, stripped naked and humiliated, mocked and ridiculed, yet He did not retaliate or speak out against those who were abusing Him.** He was beaten so extremely that He was almost beyond recognition, and yet each drop of blood was for the cleansing of the nations, ...for anyone who would trust in His work on their behalf. **Having poured out His soul to death, the Father saw to it that He was not thrown into a common grave with the criminals, but was placed in a rich man’s tomb** with a quantity of spices that would rival a king’s burial. **His life, His faith, His trust were not wasted, or in vain. On the third day, He arose, and He sits at the Father’s right hand to this day, seeing the fruit of the travail of His soul, and He is satisfied.** Because He was willing to bear the sins of us all, those who hear and believe in His work are being justified by faith. **He has become a light to the nations, and a covenant for all who will trust in Him.** Because of His obedience, the Father has exalted Him above every other name. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. **The Slaughtered Sheep is being honored every day by those who live for Him. He will come again in glory and will share the spoils with those who reign with Him.**