

Looking at the character of the Servant of Yahweh, the servant would not only  
Is He the Davidic Messiah?  
Isaiah 40-53

The Servant of Yahweh is prophesied in Isaiah 40-53, twenty times. The problem is identification. Is the Servant the nation of Israel or an individual? If he is an individual, is he a king, a prophet like Isaiah, a historical figure like Moses, or is he still to come? Is the servant a collective as the nation of Israel or the pious of Israel or the prophets of Israel? To aid in identification, it would be advantageous to describe the nature of the servant and his mission. Isaiah 53. In Isaiah 53:1-2, it is apparently

The servant was to be a human-born prophet "called from the womb", (49:1-2) empowered by the holy spirit who will bring forth justice (42:1). He is a suffering servant carrying the griefs and sorrows of others. (53:4-5). But he meets unbelief (53:1) and though he is of a sinless character (53:9), he is condemned as a criminal (53:5-6). His death however, acts as a guilt offering for others (53:10). His sacrifice justifies many (53:11) and his life is a light also to the gentiles (42:6). Eventually the Servant will establish ultimate justice (42:4). Many believed this to refer to Israel.

The belief that the servant is to be identified with the nation of Israel is due partly to the fact that the nation of Israel is indeed sometimes called my servant (41:8ff), and the servant is called Israel (49:3). Early Jewish interpreters said at one time that the exalted servant was to be identified as the Messiah while the suffering servant was to be identified with the Hebrew nation. Their difficulty was in identifying the coming Messiah with both exaltation and with suffering. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 depict <sup>than</sup> sufferings of the Hebrew nation - sufferings which God will use to redeem the world. This view however is very unlikely for the nation at this time was suffering for her own sins but the servant in 53 was suffering for the sins of others.

Looking at the characteristics of the servant, the servant could not possibly refer to the nation. The servant was to be chosen from the womb, was to be empowered by the holy spirit, was to bring Jacob back (49:5), was to bring salvation to the ends of the earth, and was to be obedient to God (50:5). The servant was unique in many ways and too unlike Israel throughout all her history. The nation of Israel was far from being a spotless sacrifice who would take away the sins of the world.

The most convincing evidence against the servant being in all cases the nation of Israel is in Isaiah 53. In Isaiah 53:4-6, it is apparently the nation of Israel who is the cause of grief and suffering for the servant and it is for their sin that he is pierced, "But he was pierced for our transgressions." If "the nation" of Israel is substituted for He in Isaiah 53, one comes up with the most unlikely phenomena of Israel bearing their own griefs and sorrows for themselves, that the nation was chastened substitutionally for themselves, and by their own scourging, they are healed. It would not make sense. The servant spoken of here must be someone other than the nation as a whole.

The view which is less popular than the former, that the servant represents a pious group within the nation, say a group of prophets, priests, or the like is much more plausible. The servant here then would be a small group of righteous men that are to suffer for the sins of their people. However, this view runs into many of the same difficulties as the previous, namely that the manner in which the term servant is used, his character i.e. his sinless character, and the far reaching implications of his life and death reflected in the servant songs (42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13-15; 61:1-3) and in Isaiah 53, makes this view rather untenable.

The idea that he is to be identified as an individual from the

... that he embodied the suffering servant and the Davidic Messiah (Jn. 1:25-26).  
past or identified with Isaiah is impossible. Future references means  
he can not be Moses (52:13, 15; 53:11) or any other historical figure,  
or Isaiah or any of his contemporaries (42:1). Actually it is difficult  
to equate him with any mere human if Isaiah 53:9 means he was without sin.

There are however, many parallels that can be drawn between the  
righteous servant revealed in Isaiah and the Davidic Messiah. Both are  
divinely chosen and are righteous (Isaiah 42:1,6; 9:7; Psalms 89:3,4).  
Both are humiliated (Isaiah 7:15, Dan. 9:25-26; Zech. 9:9). Both witness  
to the gentiles (49:6; 55:4). The spirit of the Lord will rest both upon  
the stem of Jesse, i.e. the Davidic line, and upon the servant (11:1-4;  
42:1). And both have the way prepared for their work (Is. 40:3; Mal. 3:1).  
One can equate the two however mainly from the exceptional quality of his  
character, the uniqueness of his relationship with Yahweh, and the mag-  
nificance of his ministry.

The final but so very significant evidence that the servant is to  
be identified with the Davidic Messiah is where the uniqueness that they  
both possessed, the nature of their lives on earth, and the glorious results  
of their actions are so perfectly integrated and culminated in the life of  
Jesus Christ. The Jesus of Nazareth is the humanly born prophet (49:1-20)  
empowered by the holy spirit (42:1) who is sinless (53:9), who suffers  
(53:5-8; Matt. 8:17), who is condemned but gives his life as a punishment  
for others (53:5-8; I Pet. 2:22-25), whose perfect sacrifice justifies  
many (53:11) and the Davidic Messiah who is exalted and glorified, who is  
the savior of Israel, and who will bring ultimate peace and justice to  
the earth. The Hebrew scriptures attested to it, John the Baptist attested  
to it (Jn. 1:29-30), and the disciples attested to it. Lastly, Jesus himself

*Saw that he embodied the suffering servant & the  
Davidic Messiah (Jn. 1:25-26 & Lk 22:37)*