

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 52:13-15

Topic

Isaiah describes the Messiah in a song considered by many the crowning jewel of the Old Testament

Title

“Come & Sing A Suffering Servant’s Song Of Sprinkling”

- ✓ Charles Spurgeon described it as “A Bible in miniature, the Gospel in its essence.”
- ✓ Kyle Yates called it, “The Mount Everest of Old Testament prophecy.”
- ✓ Frantz Delitzsch said it is “The most central, the deepest, and the loftiest thing that Old Testament prophecy has ever achieved. It is as if it had been written beneath the Cross upon Golgotha.”
- ✓ John Calvin said, “This chapter may be truly called the key to unlock the door of the whole Bible.”
- ✓ Ivan Engnell said, “Without any exaggeration, [it is] the most important text of the Old Testament.”
- ✓ Martin Luther: “This is truly the chief place in the Old Testament.”

✓ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "This chapter is the Grand Canyon of the Old Testament, displaying the depths and heights of God's redemptive purposes."

✓ J.I. Packer: "Here we find the beating heart of the Gospel, a chapter that encapsulates the essence of Jesus Christ's redemptive work."

✓ Oswald Chambers: "The entire Bible converges on the message of **Isaiah 53.**"

In terms of structure, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a song. It contains five stanzas, each consisting of three verses. Because of its structure we are confident that the last three verses of chapter 52 belong as the first three verses of chapter 53. Remember, there were no chapter & verse divisions until around the 1200s.

We will listen to each stanza by itself. Today will be Part One of Five. Because each stanza contains three verses, I must adjust and organize my comments around three words: **Servant, Suffer, and Sprinkle.**

#1 - "Behold, My Servant" (v13)

➔ The Book of Isaiah is the most quoted book in the New Testament. The estimate is that there are over 60 direct quotations and numerous indirect references.¹

➔ Isaiah 53 is the most quoted chapter from the most quoted book.

There is no doubt that Jesus is the servant. There are, however, at least three other suggestions:

1. The nation of Israel.
2. King Darius of Persia.
3. The prophet Isaiah.

None of them make any biblical sense.

More importantly, the New Testament eliminates any confusion:

- The Gospel of Luke records Jesus Christ stating: "For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined... For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was reckoned with transgressors;' for what is written about Me has its fulfillment." *The Scripture quoted was from Isaiah 53.*

¹ *The Psalms are quoted more than Isaiah, but we consider them individual songs, not a single book.*

- In Acts 8:35 we read how “Philip [the evangelist] opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him [the Ethiopian treasurer] the good news of Jesus.”
Again, the Scripture was Isaiah 53.

Jesus is the servant who fulfills Isaiah 53. One commentator writes, “It is the unanimous testimony of the New Testament that the subject and theme of Isaiah 53 in the Old Testament is the Christ of Calvary.”

What if you did not have the unanimous testimony of the NT? It would be harder to come to a conclusion. It would be harder still if you were expecting a Military Messiah who would conquer your enemies on the field of battle.

The Ethiopian treasurer could not sort out Isaiah 53 until Philip provided the NT identification as Jesus.

We appreciate unlikely heroes. Strider the Ranger is the unlikely true King of Gondor in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Jesus was the unlikely King of kings who came to His own in order to bring them the kingdom. They did not receive Him.

Isa 52:13 Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently...

Christianity is unique in many ways. One of them is that our God humbled Himself and came as the servant of all. We’ve been singing a song for a while now that has a lyric, *name another God like this*. You can’t.

Jesus isn’t your personal servant, available to do your will. There’s a thing going around among Christians. It’s called “Demand Praying.” They emphasize a particular definition of the word “ask.” They say, “There is no doubt that this word describes someone who prays authoritatively, in a sense demanding something from God. This person knows what he needs and is so filled with faith that he isn’t afraid to boldly come into God’s Presence to ask and expect to receive what he has requested.”

Jesus served you by dying on the Cross and taking upon Himself your sin.

It follows that we serve by dying to ourselves daily. We don’t demand; we wait for the Lord to command.

You dads and moms - Are you teaching your kids to demand everything & anything that they want? Is that even a relationship? The person who does that in the NT is the Prodigal Son.

Did Jesus make demands upon His Father in Heaven? Did Jesus tell His Father what to do for Him? Just the opposite. "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise" (John 5:19).

"Prudently" doesn't capture the power of what is being said. The ISV translates it as *prospering*.

The effort to redeem lost humanity **will** prosper; it **will** succeed. It is the perfect plan executed by the perfect Person.

Isa 52:13 ... He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.

"Extolled" isn't a word we use much. It has a bunch of possible definitions, e.g., "standard" (like a banner on a high pole), "lifted-up," and "refuge."

The Messiah would be a standard lifted up on a high pole for those who sought refuge.

If you are familiar with the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, you will remember the episode in which poisonous serpents were in the Israelite camp biting and killing them. Moses put a bronze serpent on a pole. It was a standard. Any Israelite who was bitten could simply look at the pole lifted-up and it would be refuge to them in that they would not die.

Jesus told us that it was a picture of the salvation refuge He would accomplish by being "lifted-up" on the Cross. He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life" (3:14-15).

You may have seen a 'B' movie in which someone ends up in the snake pit. Multiple snakes bite and hang-on accompanied by lots of screaming. That is how unbelievers look from Heaven. Take refuge at the Cross. Look to Jesus for your help. The Cross upon which the Lord died is the only remedy for defeating "that Serpent of old, the devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9).

“Exalted” also involves being lifted-up, but in context, Isaiah was no longer talking about the Cross. This is Jesus lifted-up to Heaven. In the Book of Acts the apostle Peter preached, “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it” (Acts 2:23-24).

The Jews were awaiting the Messiah. Isaiah described Him. He would be a servant to all by dying in a manner illustrated by the serpent on the pole so that anyone who looked to Him for salvation would be saved. We can see this would be a hard sell for those with hardened hearts.

*Lifted up was He to die
'It is finished' was His cry
Now in Heaven exalted high
Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

#2- “Behold, My Suffering Servant” (v14)

After 20+ movies, in the final battle, Captain America finally said it: “Avengers, assemble.”

The way he said it, subdued, was an interesting choice.

Ecce Homo.

Those are the Latin words used by Pontius Pilate in the Vulgate translation of the Gospel of John. He presents a scourged Jesus, bound and crowned with thorns, to a hostile crowd. In English he said “Behold, the man.”

How did Pilate say it, I wonder? Was it matter-of-fact? Was it emotional? Was he loud or soft?

Three English words, two Latin words; the very brevity catches your breath. It was a live event. A man’s life was at stake. A nation was at stake. The world was at stake. Jesus must move forward, to the Cross.

Isaiah *ecce homo’s* in verse fourteen.

Isa 52:14 Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men;

There are a few ways of hearing this. One would be Pilate's appraisal that Jesus was just a man. He was no threat to Israel or to Rome. Of course, Pilate was wrong.

Was it sympathy with which he spoke? Was Pilate saying, "Look at him. He's barely recognizable as a man."

Here is another, probably not what Pilate meant, but certainly appropriate. "Behold, Man," as in Mankind.

Jesus was representing Mankind. His many biblical names include "The Last Adam" & "The Second Man" (First Corinthians 15:45, 47).

The first man, Adam, had failed. The Second Man, Jesus, had succeeded and was going to finish it by dying in our place.

God told Adam & Eve that if they disobeyed Him, they would die. They ate the forbidden fruit (probably a fig) and they died:

- They immediately died *spiritually*.
- They began to die *physically*.
- They would die *eternally* - meaning they would die then live forever separated from God and in constant, conscious torment.

Thanks to our original parents, we *inherit* a sin nature. Sin is *imputed* to us. We commit *individual* sins.

Our only hope is that a Second Adam would be born, without a sin nature. He would have to resist the tempting of the devil. He would need to live a sinless life, and then be willing to die in our place.

Survey history. Could anyone else do this? Buddha? Mohammed? Vishnu? What would Confucius say?

*The tempest's awful voice was heard
O Christ, it broke on Thee!
Thine open bosom was my ward
It braved the storm for me*

*Thy form was scarred, Thy visage marred
Now cloudless peace for me.*

#3 - "Behold, My Suffering Servant Sprinkles" (v15)

We need a cleansing which makes us fit for God's holy presence. An outward sprinkling of water symbolized the inward cleansing of our souls.

Isa 52:15 So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.

**If you are a king but you keep your mouth shut before another king, that king is
King of kings!**

This is Jesus after His return. He establishes a Kingdom of God on Earth that will last one-thousand years. Israel, and Jerusalem especially, will be the capital of the world. Humans in mortal bodies will be on the Earth. They will need salvation, here depicted as "sprinkling."

I again appeal to the remarkable conversion of the Ethiopian treasurer. Think of him in terms of verse fifteen. "For what had not been told [him he saw], And what [he] had not heard [he considered]. Philip told him the Good News of salvation; he saw it; his wanting to be baptized by Philip means he considered and received the Lord.

There will be a whole lot of sprinkling going on in the Kingdom.

There is something subtle happening in this song that we will get more into later (Lord willing).

It seems that the 5 stanzas match the 5 Levitical offerings in the OT.

1. We see the Burnt offering - 52:13-15
2. We see the Meal offering - 53:1-3
3. We see the Peace offering - 53:4-6
4. We see the Sin offering - 53:7-9
5. We see the Trespass (guilt) offering - 53:10-12

The Hebrew word for "burnt offering" means *to ascend*, literally to *go up in smoke*. The smoke from the sacrifice ascends to God, "a soothing aroma to the LORD" (Leviticus 1:9). The entire animal would be consumed (except for the hide).

It prefigures Jesus on the Cross in several ways:

1. His physical life was completely consumed. He genuinely died.
2. He ascended to God.
3. His covering (that is, His garment) was distributed to those who officiated over His sacrifice (Matthew 27:35).
4. He gives to those who believe in Him a robe of righteousness.

The Jews understandably had a hard time seeing the Messiah as a suffering servant. They do not see Him yet. Built into the Temple sacrifices was a symbolism that would help. All of the sacrifices, the rituals, the feasts... They all prefigured the coming Messiah, the Savior, Jesus.

*Lord, through the blood of the Lamb that was slain
Cleansing for me, cleansing for me!
From all the guilt of my sin now I claim
Cleansing from Thee, cleansing from Thee*

*Sinful and black though the past may have been
Many the crushing defeats I have seen
Yet on Thy promise, O Lord, now I lean:
Cleansing for me, cleansing for me!*

*From all the sins over which I have wept
Cleansing for me, cleansing for me!*

*Far, far away, by the blood-current swept
Cleansing for me, cleansing for me!*

*Jesus Thy promise I dare to believe
And as I come Thou dost now me receive
That over sin I may never more grieve
Cleansing for me, cleansing for me!*