

ISAIAH 52: 13-53: 12 -THE VICARIOUS SUFFERING OF THE SERVANT

INTRODUCTION

The next great text that brings us to see Jesus Christ in His total work, perhaps one of the greatest in the Hebrew Bible in presenting the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, is in Isaiah 53. This is the final “servant song” of Isaiah. There are four such servant songs: one in 42, one in 49, 50, and then in this concluding one in 53, actually beginning at 52:13 through 53. This great chapter and servant song is alluded to or referred to at least thirty to thirty-one times in the Greek New Testament. It is clearly understood by the early church and I believe first by our Lord Himself, to refer to His own suffering on the cross and His resurrection, as the Suffering Servant. I believe it is a directly Messianic passage. I am reminded of Isaiah chapter 40, where Isaiah says, looking towards those who would be in exile, that “*you have suffered double for all of your sins.*” Isaiah 53 is not a righteous remnant suffering in Babylon for the sins of the nation, because everybody suffered for their own sins in Babylon. Nor can it be that it is the Gentiles that the writer is referring to, and that the nation Israel is suffering for *their* sins. Certainly the suffering that is experienced in the nation of Israel does not pay for the sins committed by Gentiles. So I believe that this is clearly a directly Messianic text, bringing us to none other than Jesus Christ.

In Acts chapter 8, Philip, going to the Ethiopian eunuch, heard him reading from this text in Isaiah. We are told that Philip opened up the text and preached to him Jesus from this very text. I believe it is perhaps one of the greatest texts that refers to the total work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson 1: Isaiah 52:13

1.1 Text

הִנֵּה יִשְׁכַּל עַבְדֵי יְרוּם וְנִשְׂא וְגַבְהָ מְאֹד:

1.2 Vocabulary

שָׁכַל	Verb	“to deal prudently” or “to prosper”
עַבְד	Noun	“servant”
רוּם	Verb	“to arise”
גַּבְהָ	Verb	“to be high”
מְאֹד	Adverb	“exceedingly”

1.3 Grammar

הִנֵּה יִשְׁכַּל עַבְדֵי

“Behold . . .” or “Lo . . .” This is an interjection, calling our attention to what is to follow. יִשְׁכַּל עַבְדֵי, “. . . my servant will prosper . . .” or “. . . will succeed . . .” Actually, this is parsed as a Hiphil imperfect, third masculine singular, from the root שָׁכַל. Notice the A-I pattern, the י giving it away as a third masculine singular in this י prefix. The verb שָׁכַל can mean “to deal prudently.” It can also mean “to prosper” or “to succeed.” I cannot help but feel that we have a double meaning here, to “act wisely” as well as “succeed.” This is of course what Jesus did. He was an obedient son to His father, who acted wisely, but who succeeded in all that He was to accomplish. “Behold my servant will succeed . . .” Notice יִשְׁכַּל; this is the Father addressing His servant, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is from the noun עַבְד. It is in construct with the pronominal suffix י. Notice

עֲבֹד becomes עֲבָדְךָ, and then יְ. is the pronominal, first person singular suffix. “Behold my servant shall succeed . . .”

יָרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְגָבַהּ מְאֹד

Notice we have three verbs, defining how the servant is going to succeed.

יָרוּם, “. . . he shall be lifted up . . .” The verb יָרוּם is the stem. It is a Qal imperfect, third masculine singular with the יְ here, from the stem יָרוּם. It is a middle weak verb. It means “to be lifted up” or “to be exalted.” One cannot help but think of the exaltation of Jesus Christ as the beginning note of this great text. יָרוּם can also mean “to arise.” We are looking, no doubt, at the resurrection. Jesus arose. He was lifted up from the grave. He was also highly exalted. He shall be raised up, both from the grave and in exaltation.

The repetition is for emphasis here. Notice וְ is a conjunction, and the root is נִשָּׂא, “to lift up.” It is a Niphal perfect, third masculine singular, from the root נִשָּׂא. Notice the I-vowel, the **hireq**, followed by a **daghesh forte** in the שׁ, showing us that a נ has assimilated: נִשָּׂא became נִשָּׂא, with the doubling of the שׁ here, followed by the A-vowel, which shows it to be a Niphal stem. “Behold my servant . . . shall be raised, and he shall be lifted up . . .” The וְ is a **waw conversive**, turning over the verb, making the perfect a future: “and he shall be lifted up.” We are looking at His resurrection and His exaltation in these verbs. וְגָבַהּ מְאֹד, “. . . and shall

be exceedingly high.” Notice גָבַהּ is the verb that means “to be high”, followed by the adverb מְאֹד, that is, “. . . He shall be exceedingly

high . . .” He is not just going to be raised and lifted up. He is going to be made exceedingly high, with what the Father will accomplish through the work of the Son. גָבַהּ is a Qal perfect, third masculine singular, from the root גָבַהּ. Notice the **mappiq** in the ה, or the little dot. The Masoretes wanted us to be sure and pronounce the ה here and so a **mappiq** is added to it. The וְ again is a **waw conversive**, turning the verb over, putting it into the

future. “. . . *he shall be exceedingly high.*” We cannot help but think of the glorification of Jesus. He was exalted to the right hand of the Father, into that high position.

1.4 Translation

“Behold my servant will succeed, he shall be raised up, and he shall be lifted up, and he shall be exceedingly high.”

1.5 Application/Interpretation

We begin this great servant song then in verse thirteen with the note of glorification. Glorification starts with passion. I cannot help but think of our Lord Jesus in John 13, when Judas was about to betray him. He went out, and we are told that Jesus said these words, “Now is the Son of Man glorified.” The route to glorification comes through His passion. We are seeing this here in the very beginning.

I am also struck by the fact that in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, we have two verbs used here. *“Behold my servant shall be lifted up (u[ya<w) and shall be glorified (doca<zw).”* These two verbs reoccur in John’s Gospel. For example, in John 3:14, as Moses (u!ywsen) “lifted up” the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man (u[yoqh?nai) “be lifted up.” In John we have this same verb, looking at a double meaning: viewing the cross (Jesus was lifted up on the cross), and the resurrection and ascension that followed the cross. Then in John 12:32, *“If I be lifted up (u[ywqw?), I will draw all people to me.”* This great text again is looking at the cross and the exaltation following resurrection that our Lord experienced. doca<zw is another verb used in the Septuagint. The verb is used in relationship to our Lord Jesus in John’s Gospel when we hear Jesus saying in John 13, “Now is the Son of Man e]doca<sqh,” “now is the Son of Man glorified.” And the resurrection will cause Him to be glorified. We also see the same verb in that great high priestly prayer in John 17, where the verb doca<zw is repeated when the Son prays to the Father to glorify Him with the glory He shared with Him from eternity.

The Septuagint used two verbs to describe the threefold verbal usage in the Hebrew. John, led by the Holy Spirit, used those two verbs to describe what our Lord had originally taught about His own exaltation and glorification.

As we move then into verse fourteen, we learn that the route to glorification is going to be passion in the next two verses.

Lesson 2: Isaiah 52:14

2.1 Text

כְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים כֵּן-מִשְׁחַת מַאִישׁ מְרֹאָהוּ
וְתֵאָרוּ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:

2.2 Vocabulary

כְּאֲשֶׁר	Conjunction	“as” or “just as”
שָׁמְמוּ	Verb	“to be astonished”
כֵּן	Adverb	“thus”
מִשְׁחַת	Noun	“disfigurement”
מְרֹאָה	Noun	“appearance”
תֵּאָרוּ	Noun	“form”

2.3 Grammar

כְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים

כְּאֲשֶׁר is a conjunction meaning “as.” “*As many were astonished at you.*”

Notice שָׁמְמוּ is a Qal perfect, third common plural, from the root שָׁמַם, and this means “to be awestruck.” “*As many were awestruck, amazed at you . . .*” רַבִּים is an adjective meaning “many ones” or “many people.” So “*As many people . . .*”, we could supply here, “. . . *are astonished at you . . .*” “*As many have become astonished at you . . .*” The use of the perfect here in this section, I believe is what we call a “prophetic perfect,” that is, it is written in the perfect tense even though it is looking at a future time frame to show that the action is already completed in the mind of God. It is already as good as done. It is as Romans 8 when Paul says that we have already been glorified. He uses the aorist tense in Greek, thus looking at a completed action. Even though we have not yet entered into glorification, it is as good

as accomplished. I think the same idea is here: “As many were astonished at you . . .” looks at the future as though it has already happened.

כֵּן-מִשְׁחַת מֵאִישׁ מִרְאֵהוּ

“ . . . thus there was a disfigurement of his form beyond that of a

man . . .” כֵּן here is an adverb meaning “thus.” מִשְׁחַת is a noun that means “disfigurement.” “Thus there was a disfigurement beyond that of a man . . .” In מֵאִישׁ, מֵ is a comparative use of the מִן here, and אִישׁ means “man”. “Thus there was a disfigurement in his appearance beyond that of a man.” The word “appearance” is מִרְאֵהוּ, with הוּ, the pronominal suffix, third masculine singular meaning “his appearance.” מִרְאֵהוּ

became מִרְאֵהוּ with one of the ה’s eliding. “. . . thus there was a disfigurement beyond that of a man in his appearance . . .” or “. . . as to his appearance . . .” We are looking here at the beatings and all that Jesus went through in the crucifixion, in the trial, and then ultimately leading up to the crucifixion.

וְתֵאָרוּ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:

“ . . . and his form . . .” In וְ, is a conjunction, תֵאָרוּ is a noun that means “form,” and וּ is a pronominal suffix, third masculine singular. “. . . and his form . . .” מִבְּנֵי אָדָם. Here we have that comparative use of the מִן again. “. . . his form beyond that of the sons of men.” Notice the ן in the מִן has assimilated into the ב here, מִבְּנֵי becoming מִבְּנֵי, with the **daghesh forte** in the ב. “. . . among the sons of men.” בְּנֵים is the plural for “sons,” and since it is in construct here with אָדָם, it becomes בְּנֵי, with the **sere-yod** in construct. “And his form beyond that of the sons of men.”

2.4 Translation

“As many were astonished at you, thus there was a disfigurement of his appearance beyond that of a man, and his form beyond that of the sons of men.”

2.5 Application/Interpretation

Here we no doubt see the Lord’s beatings and abuse accompanying His trial and crucifixion. He goes further to describe His passion in the next verse.

Lesson 3: Isaiah 52:15

3.1 Text

כֵּן יִזֶה גוֹיִם רַבִּים עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם
כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סִפֵּר לָהֶם רָאוּ וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ
הִתְבוֹנְנוּ:

3.2 Vocabulary

נזה	verb	“to sprinkle”
קפץ	verb	“to close” or “to shut”
פה	noun	“mouth”
ספר	verb	“to relate”
בין	verb	“to understand”

3.3 Grammar

כֵּן יִזֶה גוֹיִם רַבִּים

“*Thus will he sprinkle many nations.*” Notice the כֵּן again is an adverb meaning “thus.” יִזֶה comes from the verb יִזֶה, and notice the נ has assimilated in the ז. Actually this **pe nun** verb is a Hiphil with the A-I pattern here: “*Thus will he cause many nations to be sprinkled.*” Some want to translate this “startle,” but when you go to Leviticus 16, and especially in a text as the great Day of Atonement (**yom kippur**), we find that יִזֶה is used repetitiously throughout that text to look at atonement in the sprinkling of the blood of the goat and the bullock. Leviticus 16 uses this verb. This verb has cultic meaning. So we should translate it as “sprinkle.” I believe we are looking at the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon the cross for many

nations. גוֹיִם גּוֹיִם רַבִּים is a masculine adjective plural noun, and רַבִּים is another masculine plural form with the ים here. He is not just going to sprinkle one nation, but we are told “many nations.” I cannot help but think of that great hymn in Revelation 5, that out of every nation and tribe and people, there are those who are praising the Lamb who was slain. And through His blood, many have now become priests and have become God’s people through what Christ has accomplished.

In the next phrase, Isaiah goes on to say,

עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם

“... upon him, kings will shut their mouths . . .” or “. . . at him . . .” Notice the preposition עַל, and then יוֹ, a pronominal suffix, third masculine singular, on this preposition, “upon him.” יִקְפְּצוּ is a Qal imperfect, third masculine plural, from the root קִפֵּץ, meaning “to shut.” It will be kings that will shut their mouths at him. מְלָכִים is from מֶלֶךְ. It is a noun, masculine plural, with the ים ending. This is followed by פִּיהֶם, the noun פֶּה and the pronominal suffix הֶם, third masculine plural. In the ancient near east, when one would be brought before a subject, it would often depict one putting one’s hand up to one’s lips, as though to silence the lips before this great king. I believe this is looking at Jesus, and the great truth that, “Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2). It does not mean that everyone will be saved. It only means that Christ will have universal dominion, either as one’s Savior or as one’s Judge. And kings, no matter how great they are, will bow before Him, either as Savior or as their Judge. “. . . kings will shut their mouths at him . . .”

כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סִפְּרָ לָהֶם רְאוּ

“... for . . .” Notice this causative clause here, with the conjunction “for.” “... for that which has not been told to them, they will see . . .” אֲשֶׁר is a relative pronoun “that which,” and the negative particle לֹא. Notice סִפְּרָ is

a Pual perfect, third masculine singular, from ספר, “to tell” or “to relate.”
 “. . . for that which has not been related to them . . .” Notice לָהֶם. Here we
 have the preposition followed by הֶם, pronominal suffix. “. . . that which
 has not been told to them, they shall see . . .” רָאוּ is from the verb רָאָה, a
lamed he verb, and the ה has dropped out. It is a Qal perfect, third common
 plural, meaning “to see.” “. . . for that which has not been told to them, they
 will see . . .” This again is a prophetic perfect viewing the future as if
 already accomplished.

וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ הֵתְבוּנָנוּ:

“. . . and that which . . .” Notice the relative pronoun again. “. . . that which
 they have not heard . . .” שָׁמְעוּ is a Qal perfect third common plural from
 שָׁמַע. “. . . that which they have not heard . . .” הֵתְבוּנָנוּ, “. . . they shall
 understand.” The verb here is from בִּין. It is a middle weak verb. This is a
 Hithpolel perfect, third common plural, from the root בִּין. Notice the
 gemination of the ה here in this Hithpolel. “. . . that which they have not
 heard, they will themselves come to understand.”

3.4 Translation

*“Thus will he sprinkle many nations; at him, kings will shut their mouths,
 for that which has not been told to them, they will see, and that which they
 have not heard, they will understand.”*

3.5 Application/Interpretation

I believe that what we are being taught in this text is that kings will close
 their mouths before the Lord, because they are going to be told things that
 they have not seen, in the glorious resurrection, exaltation, and ultimate
 coming judgment of our Lord Jesus. That which they have not heard, in any
 time, in any previous history, they are going to come to understand. I believe
 this great text points to the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus, who by sprinkling
 many nations, has now become Lord in universal dominion over all. And
 even kings will have to recognize this, and they will either be facing the
 Lord Jesus as their Savior or as their eternal Judge.

From the introduction of the Servant's glorification through passion the prophet discusses the ignoble beginning of this Servant in 53:1-3.