



Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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New Testament Citations of Isaiah 52:1-12

- God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you [Israelites] (Isaiah 52:5 cited in Roman 2:23)
- How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news (Isaiah 52:7 cited in Romans 10:15)
- Go out from their midst... Touch no unclean thing (Isaiah 52:11 cited in 2 Cor 6:17)

God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you

Isaiah 52:4 *For thus says the Lord GOD: "My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing. ⁵ Now therefore what have I here," declares the LORD, "seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail," declares the LORD, "and continually all the day my name is despised." (ESV)*

Isaiah 52:4 *Thus says the Lord: Formerly, my people went down into Egypt to sojourn there, and they were led by force to the Assyrians. ⁵ And now, why are you here? This is what the Lord says, Because my people were taken for nothing, you marvel and howl. This is what the Lord says, Because of you, my name is continually blasphemed among the nations. (A New English Translation of the Septuagint)*

Rom 2:23 *You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴ For, as it is written [in Isaiah 52:5], "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." (ESV)*

God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you

- The Apostle Paul's citation of **Isaiah 52:5** (in **Romans 2:24**) is in a section of the book of Romans where Paul is systematically laying out the Gospel which he told the Roman church he was "eager to preach" (Rom 1:15) to them.
- In order to show man's need for the "righteousness of God" that comes to those who believe the Gospel, Paul begins his Gospel presentation by *first* demonstrating that *all* men are sinners:
 - All *Gentiles* Are Sinners (Romans 1:18-32)
 - All *Jews* Are Sinners (Romans 2:1-3:8)
 - Therefore All *Men* Are Sinners (Romans 3:9-20)
- The citation of **Isaiah 52:5** occurs in the *second* section where the Apostle Paul is demonstrating that all *Jews* are sinners.

God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you

- In Paul's day, most Jews had come to the *false* conclusion that, because in the past God had shown *special favor* to their race, they would be *exempt* from condemnation
- They had *mistakenly* come to believe that a mere *physical* connection with the nation Israel (i.e., having descended from Abraham) would save them.
- In *this* section of the Roman letter (Rom 2:1 – 3:8), Paul *repudiates* that claim by demonstrating that the Jews (like the Gentiles) are *sinful* and therefore *equally* under the wrath of God.

God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you

- The Jews *bragged* about their relationship with God and relied on the fact that He had given *them* (*not* the Gentiles) His written Law.
- Not only that, but they considered themselves to be fully qualified to *teach* the Law to *others*.
- And so the Apostle Paul says to them:
 - *...you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relationship to God and... you are convinced that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an educator of the senseless, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the essential features of knowledge and of the truth... (Rom 2:17-20)*

God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you

- All well and good, says Paul – you *have* the Law and you *claim* to be able to *teach* the Law – but do you *keep* the Law?
 - ...therefore you who teach *someone else*, do you not teach *yourself*? You who preach against stealing, *do you steal*? You who tell others not to commit adultery, *do you commit adultery*? You who abhor idols, *do you rob temples*? (Rom 2:21-22)
- Paul then points out that, despite their grandiose *claims*, they actually *don't* keep the Law:
 - You who *boast* in the law dishonor God by *transgressing the law*! (Rom 2:23)

God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you

- As evidence that neither they nor their ancestors have *ever* kept the law, the Apostle Paul cites **Isaiah 52:5** (from the Septuagint):
 - *For, as it is written [in Isaiah 52:5], “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”*
- So, while the Jews may have ***boasted*** about ***having*** and ***knowing*** the Law, according to ***Isaiah***, it was their ***disobedience*** to the Law that caused the Gentiles to think and speak evil of the God who ***gave*** them the Law!

God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you

- Isaiah 52:5 (in the *Masoretic* text) seems to say that the blaspheming of God by the Gentiles, occurred when the heathen saw that the people of Israel had been *exiled*.
- This observation then caused the Gentiles to conclude that the God of Israel was unable to protect his worshippers and was therefore weak and untrustworthy.
- This raises a question: Was the name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles:
 - Because of the *disobedience* of the Jews as the *Septuagint* of Isaiah 52:5 (and Paul's citation of it) seems to say?
 - Because the Gentiles saw that God put the Israelites out of their land and therefore assumed that he was unable to protect his worshippers as the Masoretic text of Isaiah 52:5 seems to imply?

God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you

- Ezekiel 36 demonstrates that it was in fact the sin of the Israelites that had *ultimately* led to the Gentiles blaspheming of the name of God, because it was their sin that was the *cause* of their being exiled, which then caused the Gentiles to blaspheme God:
 - *...when the house of Israel was living on their own land, they defiled it by their behavior and their deeds.... So... I scattered them among the nations... But when they arrived in the nations where they went... It was said of them, "These are the people of the LORD, yet they have departed from his land." ... Therefore ... "This is what the sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake that I am about to act, O house of Israel, but for the sake of my holy reputation which you profaned among the nations where you went."* (Ezekiel 36:17-23)

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news

Isaiah 52:7 *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." (Isa 52:7 ESV)*

Rom 10:15 *And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written [in Isaiah 52:7], , "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Rom 10:15 ESV)*

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news

- The Apostle Paul's citation of Isaiah 52:7 in Romans 10:25 occurs in Romans 9-11, a section of the book of Romans where the Apostle Paul is addressing a possible of *objection* to the Gospel that he has just laid out in the previous eight chapters.
- The possible objection that Paul addresses is this: How can the coming of the Gospel and the New Testament age be a fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, when a large numbers of Jews in Paul's day were *rejecting* the Gospel?

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news

- In his response to this objection, after first reaffirming his deep love for the Jewish people (**Romans 9:1-5**), Paul makes the following points:
 - God has *always* had the sovereign freedom to choose *whoever* he desires to save. (**Romans 9:6-29**)
 - The *immediate* cause of the rejection of Israel and the salvation of the Gentiles was because of the *different way* in which the two groups were *responding* to the gospel. (**Romans 9:30 – 10:21**)
 - Israel's rejection is neither *total* nor *final* (**Romans 11:1-36**)
- The citation of Isaiah 52:7 occurs in the *second* section, where Paul addresses the *immediate* cause of Israel's rejection.

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news

- In Romans 9:30 – 10:4 Paul shows that:
 - The **Gentiles** were **receiving** God's free gift of righteousness by means of **faith**
 - Whereas the **Jews** were **perishing** because they were trying to produce their righteousness through **good works** and **law keeping**.
- *What shall we say then?– that the **Gentiles** who did **not** pursue righteousness obtained it, that is, a righteousness that is **by faith**, but **Israel** even though pursuing a **law** of righteousness did **not** attain it. Why not? Because they pursued it **not by faith but** (as if it were possible) **by works**... For **ignoring** the righteousness that comes **from God**, and seeking instead to establish **their own** righteousness, they did **not** submit to **God's righteousness**. (Rom 9:30-32; 10:3 NET)*

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news

- In Romans 10:5-13 Paul contrasts the two methods of justification in order to show that:
 - Justification **by law** keeping is **beyond** the reach of sinful men.
 - But justification **by faith** is (comparatively speaking) simple, easy, and adapted to **all** men without distinction.
- *For Moses writes about the **righteousness that is by the law**: “The one who **does these things will live by them.**” But the **righteousness that is by faith** says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)... For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation... For **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** (Rom 10:5-11 NET)*

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news

- In Romans 10:14-17, the section where Paul cites Isaiah 52:7, Paul shows that: the Gospel of Christ is adapted to all men (Jew and Gentile alike), but that the gospel must be sent (preached) to all men if they are to be saved.
- Notice the chain of reasoning set forth by Paul in Romans 10:14-17 (ESV):
 - *How then will they **call on** him in whom they have not **believed**?*
 - *And how are they to **believe** in him of whom they have never **heard**?*
 - *And how are they to **hear** without someone **preaching**?*
 - *And how are they to **preach** unless they are **sent**?*

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news

- It is at *this* point that Paul cites Isaiah 52:7:
 - *As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"* (Rom 10:15b ESV)
- In citing this verse, Paul is showing that the appropriate reaction for those who hear this "*good news*" is to react with *joy* and *delight*.
- Remember how Isaiah, after making this statement said:
 - *...your watchmen shout; in unison they shout for joy, for they see with their very own eyes the LORD's return to Zion. ⁹ In unison give a joyful shout, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD consoles his people; he [redeems] Jerusalem.*

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news

- And yet, instead of *shouting for joy* as the LORD's messengers proclaimed the Gospel in Paul's day, the Jews *rejected* the Gospel.
- Paul goes on in the very next verse to show that this is exactly how Isaiah (in another place) *prophesied* that they would react:
 - *But [the Israelites] have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says [in Isaiah 53:1], "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"* (Rom 10:16 ESV)
- Therefore Paul, in his citations from the book of Isaiah, demonstrates the *immediate* cause for the rejection of the Jewish people in his day: instead of *delighting* in the good news of the Gospel, the Jews were, in large numbers, *rejecting* the Gospel!

Go out from their midst... Touch no unclean thing

Isaiah 52:11 *Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. (ESV)*

2 Cor 6:16 *What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." ¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." ^{7:1} Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (ESV)*

Go out from their midst... Touch no unclean thing

- In 2 Cor 6:17 Paul applies the instructions given in Isaiah 52:11 to the exiles returning from Babylonian captivity to the Christian community as the people of God.
- This passage (in Isaiah 52:11) and others like it given throughout the OT, speak about the special relationship between God and his people and the ethical consequences of that relationship:
 - *I will bring you out from the nations, and will gather you from the lands where you are scattered... I will eliminate from among you the rebels and those who revolt against me... Then you will know that I am the LORD... For there on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the sovereign LORD, all the house of Israel will serve me, all of them in the land.*
(Eze 20:34, 38,40 NET)

Go out from their midst... Touch no unclean thing

- In applying these OT instructions to his New Testament readers, the Apostle Paul demonstrates that the New Testament Age is the *ultimate* fulfillment Israel's restoration prophecies.
- The Old Testament the people of God were commanded to *separate* themselves from the pagan environment they had lived in for the past 70 years: "*Leave! Leave! Get out of there!*" (52:11)
- Likewise, the New Testament believers living in Corinth are now instructed by the Apostle Paul, as he cites these OT restoration prophecies, to live *differently* from those in the pagan environment that they had come out of.

Go out from their midst... Touch no unclean thing

- Holiness is expected from them, as can be seen in Paul's summary of the OT quotations cited in 2 Cor 6:16-18 in the next verse:
 - *Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that could defile the body and the spirit, and thus accomplish holiness out of reverence for God. (2 Cor 7:1 NET)*
- The promises of God require a life of moral holiness that is in keeping with the gift of holiness that God has bestowed upon the New Testament Christian community.

Next Time

I plan to begin looking at The *Fourth* Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12)

There are at least *seven* citations drawn from this text in the New Testament.

Class Discussion Time



Class Discussion Time

- We saw in Rom 2:24 how the pagan world blasphemed the name of God because of the conduct of his people, the Israelites.
- Can you think of an example of people in our day who, while claiming to be the people of God, by their sinful behavior end up giving God or the Christian community a bad name?
- This is not to be confused with the hatred that unbelievers have towards Christians who are serving Christ faithfully.
- Remember, Jesus said:
 - *Remember what I told you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you... But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me.*
(John 15:20-21)

Class Discussion Time

- In his citation of Isaiah 52:7 in Rom 10:15 Paul affirms that the giving of the good news of the Gospel should be cause for *rejoicing*.
- And yet the Jews of Paul's day *rejected* the Gospel in large numbers.
- Do you sometimes let people's negative response to your evangelistic efforts *discourage* you from doing further evangelism?
- Does it help to remember that the response that some people may have had to your efforts to give them the good news of the Gospel is an *inappropriate* reaction on their part and not necessarily a reflection on you or the message you bring?
- This is not to say that we shouldn't try to be winsome and/or wise in our efforts to evangelize: "*Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone.*" (Col 4:6)