



Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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New Testament Citations of Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

- Those who have never been told of him will see. (Isaiah 52:15 cited in Romans 15:21)
- Who has believed our report? (Isaiah 53:1 cited in John 12:38, Romans 10:16)
- He bore our diseases (Isaiah 53:4 cited in Matthew 8:17)
- By his stripes you were healed (Isaiah 53:5 cited in 1 Peter 2:24)
- Like a lamb that is lead to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7 cited in Acts 8:32)
- He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth (Isaiah 53:9 cited in 1 Peter 2:22)
- He was numbered with transgressors (Isaiah 53:12 cited in Luke 22:37)

Those who have never been told of him will see

Isaiah 52:14 *As many were astonished at you-- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind-- ¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. (ESV)*

Isaiah 52:14 *Just as many shall be astonished at you— so shall your appearance be without glory from men, and your glory be absent from the men – ¹⁵ so shall many nations be astonished at him, and kings shall shut their mouth, because those who were not informed about him shall see and those who did not hear shall understand. (A New English Translation of the Septuagint)*

Rom 15:20 *I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, ²¹ but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." (ESV)*

Those who have never been told of him will see

- The Apostle Paul's citation of Isaiah 52:15b (in Romans 15:21) is in a section of the book (Romans 15:18-24) where Paul briefly reviews his *missionary labors* and explains to the Roman church why he has been *hindered* from coming to visit them (see vs. 22).
- He tells them that he has made it a practice to preach the gospel in places where there is no worship of Christ at all:
- *I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation...*

Those who have never been told of him will see

- The word “*build*” here compares the growth of Christ’s church to the building of a *temple*.
- The temple of the Lord is being constructed out of human beings, Jews and Gentiles, *among* whom God himself now dwells.
- Paul also sees the individual local churches around the world as manifestations of the temple of God – and he will not build on the foundation that another has laid (cf. 2 Cor 10:12–18).
- Paul does not condemn the efforts of *other* Christians building on the work of one another, but he believes that God has given *him* the ministry of establishing strategic churches in virgin gospel territory: “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*” (1 Cor 3:6)

Those who have never been told of him will see

- As he so often does, Paul then *supports* his point with an Old Testament *citation*:
 - *But as it is written [in Isaiah 52:15b] “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand” (Rom 15:21)*
- I believe that Paul cites this text for at least **two** reasons:
 - **First** it justifies Paul’s decision not to build on another’s foundation (vs. 20); for the text speaks of bringing a message to those who have **not heard**.
 - **Second** this fits with Paul’s understanding that he has been called as an “*apostle to the Gentiles*” (cf. Rom 11:13), since the ones who have “*never been told*” of Christ and have “*never heard*” the gospel are “*kings*” and “*nations*” mentioned in the first half of the verse that he cites from Isaiah (52:15a).
- In other words, Paul’s pioneering church planting ministry among the Gentiles is fulfilling the OT prediction in **Isaiah 52:15** about Gentiles coming to see and understand the message about **Jesus**, the Servant of the LORD.

Who has believed our report?

Isaiah 53:1 *Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (ESV)*

John 12:37 *Though [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (ESV)*

Romans 10:15 *And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” (ESV)*

Who has believed our report?

- The Apostle John's citation of **Isaiah 53:2** (in **John 12:38**) is in a section of the book of John where Jesus is said to **withdraw** from his ministry to the Jewish public, having been thoroughly **rejected** by them, **in spite of** numerous **miraculous signs** performed by him.
- John's cites **Isaiah 53:2** in order to explain this large-scale **unbelief** on the part of the Jews towards their Messiah.
- The thinking that John seeks to counter here is that that for Christ to be so **thoroughly rejected** by the Jewish people by whom and for whom the prophetic scriptures were written, calls into **question** his messianic claims!
- There is good evidence that the substantial unbelief of the Jewish people **before** Christ's resurrection served as a major hinderance to the conversion of the Jews **after** his resurrection.

Who has believed our report?

- The Christian answer, as clearly articulated by Paul (in Romans 9-11) as well as here by the Apostle John here, is that this widespread unbelief on the part of the Jews was not only **foreseen** by Scripture but **necessitated** by it:
 - *Though [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,* ³⁸ **so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:** “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (John 12:37-38)
- Verse 37 shows that though it was foreordained, there is still human **culpability** for their rejection: “**Though [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him**” (John 12:37)
- Verse 43 gives an utterly reprehensible human motive for their unbelief: “**they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.**” (John 12:43)

Who has believed our report?

- So we see that John's citation of **Isaiah 53:1** in **John 12:38** serves to *vindicate* God's righteousness in *condemning* those who had rejected Jesus and his ministry.
- The Jews' failure to believe during Jesus' day is shown to be part of a long trajectory of Jewish unbelief *throughout* Israel's history reaching back at least as far as to the unbelief of the wilderness generation, which had witnessed God's mighty acts of power (displayed through Moses) at the exodus.
- **Isaiah 53:1** shows that *even in Isaiah's day* the Jews rejected the prophetic message concerning the coming Servant of the LORD who was the promised Messiah: "*Who has believed what he has heard from us?*" – implied answer: No one.
- As we saw a couple weeks ago, Paul also cites **Isaiah 53:1** in **Rom 10:16** in the context of Jewish unbelief and the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles.
- Hence the trajectory is further extended from Isaiah's prophetic ministry to Jesus' message to Paul's preaching.

He bore our diseases

Isaiah 53:3 *He was despised and rejected by people, one who experienced pain and was acquainted with illness; people hid their faces from him; he was despised, and we considered him insignificant. ⁴ But he lifted up our illnesses, he carried our pain; even though we thought he was being punished, attacked by God, and afflicted for something he had done. (NET)*

Isaiah 52:4 *This one bears our sins and suffers pain for us, and we accounted him to be in trouble and calamity and ill-treatment. (A New English Translation of the Septuagint)*

Matthew 8:14 *And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. ¹⁶ That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases." (ESV)*

He bore our diseases

- Matthew's citation of Isaiah 53:4 (in Matthew 8:17) is in a context of physical healing, and demonstrates that there is a *connection* to be seen between the Servant's *suffering* and *physical healing*.
- Both Scripture and Jewish tradition understand that all sickness is caused, directly or indirectly, by sin.
- The Septuagint *spiritualizes* "*illnesses*" to "*sins*" in Isaiah 53:4; as does the Apostle Peter 1 Peter 2:24: "*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*"

He bore our diseases

- Spiritualizing “*illnesses*” as “*sins*” in Isaiah 53:4 is legitimate, ***not only*** because Peter uses the passage in that way, but because the general flow thought in the Fourth Servant Song supports it.
- But strictly speaking, in the *Hebrew*, Isaiah 53:4 speaks of the Servant’s bearing “*our illnesses*” and in the context, the connection between sickness and sin shows that ***the way*** he bears the sickness of others is through his suffering and death.

He bore our diseases

- Isaiah 53 is often used NT writers to show the significance of Jesus' **death**:
 - *Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter... for his life is taken away from the earth.*" (Act 8:32-33)
 - *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness...* (1 Pet 2:24)
- But when **Matthew** cites **Isaiah 53:4** in **Mat 8:17**, he applies it only to Jesus' **healing ministry**, **not** to his death.
- This is because Jesus' healing ministry is **itself** a function of his substitutionary death, by which he lays the foundation for **destroying** sickness.
- That connection can be seen when we look at the book of Matthew **as a whole**.

He bore our diseases

- The *prologue* of Matthew tells us that Jesus came to “*save his people from their sins.*” (Mat 1:21), and this statement is given within the context of the coming of the *kingdom* – “*Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?*” (Mat 2:2).
- When Jesus began his *ministry*, he not only *proclaimed* the *kingdom* but *healed* the *sick*.
- Healing and forgiveness are *often* tied together, not only in a story such as the healing of the paralytic in Mat 9:1-8 (“*the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*”-- *he then said to the paralytic--*“*Rise, pick up your bed and go home.*” – Mat 9:6), but by the fact that the *final* kingdom, in which there is *no* sickness (Rev 21:4), is made possible by Jesus’ death and the new covenant that his death enacted (26:27–29).
- Thus the healings during Jesus’ ministry can be understood not only as the *foretaste* of the kingdom but also as the *fruit* of Jesus’ death.

Like a lamb that is lead to the slaughter

Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; a man has strayed in his own way, and the Lord gave him over to our sins.* ⁷ *And he, because he has been ill-treated, does not open his mouth; like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before the one shearing it, so he does not open his mouth.* ⁸ *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. Who will describe his generation? Because his life is being taken from the earth, he was led to death on account of the acts of lawlessness of my people. (A New English Translation of the Septuagint)*

Acts 8:27 *And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship* ²⁸ *and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.* ²⁹ *And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."* ³⁰ *So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"* ³¹ *And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.* ³² *Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.* ³³ *In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."* ³⁴ *And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"* ³⁵ *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. (ESV)*

Like a lamb that is lead to the slaughter

- Luke's citation of Isaiah 53:7 (in Acts 8:32) is in a section of the book of Acts where, following the outline in Acts 1:8 ("you will be my witnesses in *Jerusalem* and in all *Judea* and *Samaria*, and to *the end of the earth*."), the gospel had made its way through Samaria and was about to be presented to a Gentile who is neither a Judean nor a Samaritan, but an Ethiopian!
- This Ethiopian is reading from an Old Testament scroll while he is sitting in his seat on the ancient equivalent of his private jet!
- By divine providence, the portion of the Old Testament that he is reading **Isaiah 53:7-8**:
 - *Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before the one shearing it, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. Who will describe his generation? Because his life is being taken from the earth*

Like a lamb that is lead to the slaughter

- Philip, meanwhile, was directed by an angel to go and *join* the Ethiopian in his chariot (vs. 29).
- After a brief discussion about the passage, Philip uses the text as a starting point to introduce this man to the gospel.
- The end result is the man believes the gospel presentation that he hears from Philip and becomes the first NT Gentile convert recorded in the book of Acts.
- This passage demonstrates how, from an early date Isaiah 53 was recognized by the early Christians as a reference to Jesus and his suffering on the cross.

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth

Isaiah 53:8 *He was led away after an unjust trial – but who even cared? Indeed, he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the rebellion of his own people he was wounded. ⁹ They intended to bury him with criminals, but he ended up in a rich man's tomb, because he had committed no violent deeds, nor had he spoken deceitfully. ¹⁰ Though the LORD desired to crush him and make him ill, once restitution is made, he will see descendants and enjoy long life, and the LORD's purpose will be accomplished through him. (NET)*

Isaiah 53:9b *...he committed no lawlessness, nor was deceit found in his mouth. (A New English Translation of the Septuagint)*

1Peter 2:21 *For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was maligned, he did not answer back; when he suffered, he threatened no retaliation, but committed himself to God who judges justly. (NET)*

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth

- The Apostle Peter's citation of Isaiah 53:9 (in 1 Peter 2:22) is in a section of the book of 1 Peter where he is talking about submission to authority and how to respond, even to *unjust* treatment by authorities.
- In verses 18-25 he specifically addresses *slaves*, telling them to "*be subject to your masters... not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are perverse.*" (1Pet 2:18)
- Slaves (and in principle all Christians) are called to suffer for doing good, "because," Peter tells them, "*Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps.*" (1Pet 2:21).

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth

- Then, to show the kind of example that Christ set for us, he cites **Isaiah 53:9b** (from the Septuagint) which tells us that Christ, though he was treated unjustly, never sinned or retaliated in response: “*He committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth*”.
- So for Peter, Christ’s suffering becomes an ***example*** for us to follow when we as Christ followers face suffering in our own lives – even when we have done nothing wrong to merit such suffering.

He was numbered with transgressors

Isaiah 53:11 *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. (ESV)*

Luke 22:35 *[Jesus] to [his disciples], “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.” ³⁶ He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. ³⁷ For I tell you that **this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’** For what is written about me has its fulfillment.” ³⁸ And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.” (ESV)*

He was numbered with transgressors

- Jesus' citation of **Isaiah 53:12** (in **Luke 22:37**) comes at the conclusion of Jesus' farewell discourse at the Last Supper in **Luke 22:35-38** and this particular account is found *only* in the Gospel of Luke.
- In view of his impending death, Jesus modifies advice that he had given to the disciples at an earlier time (cf. Luke 10:3-12)
 - *“When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.”*
- Jesus emphasizes that the coming events in which he will be involved represent the fulfillment of Scripture, quoting **Isaiah 53:12**:
 - *this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’ (Luke 22:37)*

He was numbered with transgressors

- In addition to its function as a prophetic promise, the quotation from **Isaiah 53:12** has *another* function: it provides the reason why the disciples need to make provisions for their own support and defense.
- The disciples, who are not personally involved in the fulfillment of **Isaiah 53:12**, are told by Jesus to take *precautions* because the situation in which they will find themselves is analogous to the situation that Jesus experiences in his fulfillment of **Isaiah 53:12**.
- The followers of Jesus should not expect to be treated differently than their master, and since the master, by divine necessity, must be “*numbered with the transgressors*”, the disciples should expect no better treatment.
- Therefore: “*let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.*” (Luke 22:36)

Next Time

I plan to begin looking at a section entitled
**“Restoration and Hope for a Disgraced
Woman”** (Isaiah 54:1-10)

Class Discussion Time



Class Discussion Time

- We are told by the apostle Paul that the temple of the Lord is being constructed out of human beings, Jews and Gentiles, among whom God himself now ***dwells***.
- My former Greek and Hebrew teacher, Dr. Zemek, argued passionately from passages like this that believers are ***not*** indwelt by the Holy Spirit ***individually***, but are only indwelt ***corporately*** by the Holy Spirit.
- Do you think he is right about that?
- Consider for example this text:
 - *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you**. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If **the Spirit** of him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* (Rom 8:8-11)

Class Discussion Time

- Paul does not condemn the efforts of other Christians building on the work of one another, but he believes that God has given *him* the ministry of establishing strategic churches in virgin gospel territory: “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*” (1 Cor 3:6)
- Do you think there are people God uses today like he used the Apostle Paul – people who God expects to carry the gospel to places where the gospel is *unknown*?
- Is there anything wrong with preaching the gospel in places where the gospel is *already* known?

Class Discussion Time

- The disciples, who are not personally involved in the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12, are told by Jesus in Luke 22:35-36 to take ***precautions*** because the situation in which they will find themselves is analogous to the situation that Jesus experiences in his fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12:
 - *let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one* (Luke 22:36)
- They will, in fact, often be targets of an ungodly society, being viewed as transgressors for their allegiance to Jesus.
- Do you think there is validation in this text for Christians to arm themselves in self defense against such attacks?