

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, part 5

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Overview

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 is a Hebrew poem. It is the fourth and final Servant song of Isaiah. It has five stanzas, with three verses in each stanza. See **Fifteen in Bullinger**. The stanzas serve as our outline:

| Stanza | Subject |
|------------------------|--|
| Isaiah 52:13-15 | The Servant will be exalted after He suffers. |
| Isaiah 53:1-3 | The Servant was despised and misunderstood. |
| Isaiah 53:4-6 | He suffered and died for us. |
| Isaiah 53:7-9 | He willingly suffered mistreatment at the hands of godless men, ending in His death. |
| Isaiah 53:10-12 | All this according to the will of God His Father, who put Him to grief and will exalt Him. |

Unanswered questions

Up to this point, the book of Isaiah has been a whole encyclopedia of contrasts between the sinfulness of Israel and the glory and holiness of the LORD. We are left staring at an infinite chasm. On one side there is judgment and discipline looming over the nation like a black cloud. On the other side is the bright sunlight of God's promises to Israel: promises of forgiveness, salvation, and blessing.

Let's read **Isaiah 42:20-43:7; 51:17-23**.

How will the Lord redeem and cleanse rebellious, faithless Israel, while also vindicating His holiness?

Think of it: Isaiah speaks of the wrath of the LORD on rebellious sinful Israel— and then He describes God's amazing future for Israel.

How will the LORD completely change their standing before Him?

The LORD says that the time will come when He remembers their sins no more. But how?
How will the sins of Israel and all the nations be washed away?

The LORD is holy. He can't just ignore our transgressions.

You cannot read or hear Isaiah 40-52 objectively and not come away with this question:

Since Israel has sinned so terribly so as to deserve a blackened sky and parched land, and God is Holy, how can He promise Israel forgiveness, salvation, and a profoundly great inheritance?

How could God not destroy such wicked people?

Yet He doesn't. Why not? We must be missing something.

Except it's not something: It's Someone. It's a Person.

Isaiah 52:13-53:15 answers these questions. It proclaims amazing, unexpected good news. Forgiveness of sins is accomplished through the suffering and death of the Servant.

The redemption of the world falls on the shoulders of ONE MAN, and Him crucified.

He is the one mediator between God and man. **1Timothy 2:5-6**. The New Testament reveals His name: Jesus Christ.

Job was given a vision of this Person and rejoiced. But first look at **Job 9:25-35** where he describes his predicament.

Ok, now look at **Job 19:21-27!**

We were in the same predicament as the nation of Israel. Paul cried out, "Who will rescue me from the body of this death"? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Let's read **Romans 7:21-8:1**.

A dilemma

“Hey dad – I got in very big trouble today”.

“What happened, son?”

“Well, the teacher asked Victor what the subject of ‘Billy went fishing’ is. He said, ‘Billy’. And she said, ‘that’s correct’. Then she asked me, ‘If I said, I’m beautiful’, what tense is that?’

And I said, ‘well teacher, I’m no genius, but I think that’s past!’”

This boy had a problem with verb tenses! When we read Isaiah 53 in English, we face a similar dilemma:

If Isaiah was prophesying about future events (and he was), why are nearly all of the (English) verbs in verses 2-10 in the past tense?

Verse 2: He *grew* up. Verse 3: He *was* despised and forsaken. Verse 4: our griefs He *bore*.

Verse 5: He *was* pierced through for our transgressions. He *was* oppressed (verse 7); He *was* taken away (verse 8); His *was* with a rich man in His death (verse 9).

A future event is spoken of as having occurred in the past. What’s going on?

This: the Hebrew language is quite different from the English language when it comes to **verbs**.

The English has 12 verb forms. There are 3 basic tenses: **past, present, and future**. Then there are 4 kinds of action: simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive.

Biblical Hebrew had only two verb forms: **perfect and imperfect**. There was no built-in time element.

In order to translate Biblical Hebrew into English, the translators need to supply the absent time element. They have rules they follow.

But translators are not as a rule theologians, so what seems right to them grammatically may not be what the Hebrew writer - and God – intended.

Isaiah didn't write in the past tense. The Hebrew verbs in Isaiah 53:2-10 are in the perfect verb form. Under the inspiration of the Lord, Isaiah saw the actions as whole and complete – without respect to time.

The perfect verb form is used to express an action that, from the point of view of the speaker, is completed. The perfect aspect refers to **completed action, whether in the past, the present, or the future**.

Sometimes the translators do use the future English tense to translate perfect aspect Hebrew verbs. See for example the verbs “will be higher” and “they shall see” in Isaiah 53:13 and 15.

Prophecy is often represented in the perfect form or aspect. It's direct revelation from God, who is outside of time. The actions are viewed, not in relation to time, but in relation to the certainty of those actions.

God sees the end from the beginning. He is not bound by time. What He reveals is certain to occur. In His eyes, this prophecy is so certain that it could be spoken of as if it already had occurred.

There is a great New Testament example of this in the book of Romans. We finish with **Romans 8:28-30**.