

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, part 3

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Let's read our passage – **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**.

The big picture

Isaiah foretold the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, more than 700 years before they occurred. You might be excused for thinking that he actually witnessed these events!

Isaiah gives us a divinely inspired portrait of the suffering Servant.

Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 reveals that the Servant of the Lord is the suffering Savior.

The Lord God causes the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (53:6).

His death settled the sin question forever, to the perfect satisfaction of God, the righteous holy One. (53:11).

Overview

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 is a Hebrew poem: a Servant song.

It has five stanzas, with three verses in each stanza.

The stanzas serve as our outline:

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

It has a chiasmic structure, with Isaiah 53:4-6 at the center. So ABCBA.

It is fitting that Isaiah 53:4-6 is the central stanza. **Isaiah 53:4-6** is the central message of this song.

Henry Ironside called Isaiah 53:6 "the most wonderful verse in the Bible". It is the great statement of God's grace to the undeserving.

Our passage is the fourth and final Servant Song of Isaiah. Recall that the four Servant Songs are found in :

1. **Isaiah 42:1-13**
2. **Isaiah 49:1-13**
3. **Isaiah 50:4-11**
4. **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

Unanswered questions

The fourth Servant Song is the climactic one. It completes the picture that was left unfinished by the first 3. It answers the questions that were left unanswered in the first three. Especially the **HOW** questions.

How will the Lord's Servant establish justice in the earth (**Isaiah 42:1-7**)? How will He be a covenant to the people? How will He bring Jacob back to the Lord? How will He be the light to the nations? (**49:5-10**)

In fact, questions like these have arisen throughout our journey in Isaiah.

Up to this point, the book of Isaiah has been a whole encyclopedia of contrasts between the sinfulness of Israel and the glory of the LORD. Between judgement and discipline, on the one hand, and on the other hand, promises of forgiveness, salvation, and blessing.

And each time, you are left starting at an infinite chasm.

Let's read **Isaiah 1:18-20; 4:2-6; 5:16-25; 42:20-43:7; 43:21-44:5; 48:8-11; 51:17-23.**

How will the Lord redeem and cleanse rebellious, faithless Israel? How will He vindicate 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.

I’m missing something here. How do we get from the wrath part to the amazing future part?

What must happen to completely change their standing before the LORD?

What can they do about all of their sins and iniquities? More to the point: what will God do?

He 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 knows they are real sins. He knows that they committed those sins. And He 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 can this be???

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.

And mind you, this is in the Old Testament!

He is the one mediator between God and man. The suffering Servant. The man Christ Jesus.

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

When we read Isaiah 53 in English, we face a dilemma:

If Isaiah was prophesying about future events (and he was), why are nearly all of the 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.

This happens a lot in the book of Isaiah. What's going on?

Here's what's going on: 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**. In other words, there is no built-in time element.

In order to translate Biblical Hebrew into English, the translators need to supply the time element that is absent in the Hebrew. It's a judgment call. They consider how the rest of the sentence is put together, as well as the context. But translators are not as a rule theologians, so what seems right grammatically may not be what the Hebrew writer - and God – intended.

The Hebrew verbs in Isaiah 3:2-10 are in the perfect verb form.

The perfect verb form is used to express an action that, from the point of view of the speaker or writer, is completed.

Under the inspiration of the Lord, Isaiah saw the actions as whole and complete – without respect to time.

The perfect aspect refers to **completed action, whether in the past, the present, or the future**.

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

God sees the end from the beginning. He is not bound by time.

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