

Segment 7: Isaiah 50; 51; 52:1-12

Yahweh's hand is not shortened

Isaiah 50:1-3

Antithetical parallel phrase

Yahweh did not "put away" His people with a bill of divorcement, nor did He sell them to the creditors.

Their iniquities sold them, and their transgressions caused their mother to be "put away."

Servant Song: Isaiah 50:4-11 The Lord Yahweh helps His servant

Isaiah 50:4

The Lord GOD (*Adonai YHWH*) is used four times in these verses (verses 4, 5, 7, and 9). These Hebrew words, *Adonai YHWH*, are used together 291 times in the Old Testament. They are used together 25 times in the book of Isaiah. The proper translation in English would be "the Lord Yahweh."

In verses one through three, Yahweh is speaking. But starting here, from verse 4 through verse 8, the servant is speaking about the Lord Yahweh. "He has given me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word." God would give his servant the words to speak (John 12:49; 7:15-16, 46) He would give rest to the weary. Matthews 11:28.

Isaiah 50:5

"I [the servant of the Lord Yahweh] was not disobedient, nor did I turn back." Jesus always did the Father's will (John 18:29). He submitted himself to full obedience, even to death (Matthew 26:39; Hebrews 5:7-8; Philippians 2:8).

Isaiah 50:6

He gave his back to those who strike him, his cheeks to those who pluck out his beard, and did not cover his face from humiliation and spitting. To shave one's beard would be a sign of shame and great disgrace. To pluck out a man's beard would be extremely painful (Lamentations 3:30; Micah 5:1; Psalm 129:3; Matthew 26:67; 27:30; Mark 14:65; 15:19).

Isaiah 50:7

The Lord Yahweh helps him. Therefore, he's not disgraced, and he set his face like a flint (Luke 9:51).

Isaiah 50:8-9

God was with Christ. He was near him. He will vindicate him. The servant knew that Yahweh was his help and that He was with him. He entrusted himself to the Lord Yahweh (I Peter 2:21-23).

Isaiah 50:10-11

These verses are an admonition to those among God's people who fear Yahweh. "Obey the voice of His servant. Trust in the name of Yahweh and rely on God."

Kindle a fire - Walk in the light of your fire, among the brands you have set ablaze. (KJV) "Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled." In the east, villagers would warm themselves by a fire they kindled in the center of town. Sometimes, to see in the dark, they would take a rope and light it from the fire. Then, in order to see, they would blow on the end to make it glow, and it would make sparks which they would use to try and guide their way. This is a poor substitute for the light of Yahweh. A person who does not trust in the name of Yahweh and rely on God is left to his own devices and will lie down in torment.

Awake, awake, Yahweh will comfort and bring salvation to His People

Isaiah 51:1-8

Yahweh will comfort and bring salvation to His people. Ultimately, this will happen in the very end, at the time of the restoration and the coming Kingdom of God.

Isaiah 51:9-52:3

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Yahweh; Awake as in the days of old, the generations long ago." Here is an imploring that the arm of Yahweh would again awake, as in days of old, and redeem the people of God. The arm of God, or His right hand, is symbolic of His power, of His strength.

"Rahab" is a mythical sea monster. Here it is symbolic of Egypt. (See Isaiah 30:7. Also see Job 26:12 and Psalm 89:10.) Throughout the book of Isaiah, God reminds us of His deliverance in the past. God, by His right hand, by His arm, exercised His strength and redeemed Israel from Egypt when the army of Pharaoh was defeated at the Red Sea.

Excerpts from the song of Moses after Yahweh defeated Egypt at the Red Sea

Exodus 15:12-13, 16-17

You stretched out Your right hand, The earth swallowed them.

In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; In Your strength You have guided *them* to Your holy habitation.

Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased. You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.

Now, Yahweh will again bare His arm and deliver “the ransomed of the Lord” once more, bringing them from captivity. Ultimately, this will be through the servant of Yahweh, and there will be a day when Zion is truly redeemed.

Once God bares His arm, Jerusalem (God’s people, the exiles) are told to “Rouse yourself, rouse yourself” (51:17); “Awake, awake” (52:1), and “Depart, depart” (52:11) from captivity.

Isaiah 52:4 - God’s people were in captivity in Egypt, and God’ delivered them in the time of Moses. Then the Assyrian oppressed them in the time of Hezekiah, and God delivered them again. Now, God will again redeem His people.

Isaiah 52:5-6 – The people of God will know God’s name.

Isaiah 52:7-12

This is the good news of salvation. Yahweh will bare His arm and redeem His people. The good news of God’s redemption is to be announced, preached (Romans 10:14-17). Yet this good news of salvation was not always understood or heeded. God will bring this to pass through His Suffering Servant. Who will believe the report?

Segment 8: Isaiah 52 and 53

Acts 8:32-35

The Ethiopian eunuch asked who this suffering servant was.

Isaiah 52:13

The servant of Yahweh will prosper but not yet; he has a task to complete that cannot be accomplished if he does not humble himself and submit himself entirely to the will of his God, even if that ends him in suffering to the point of death. Then, once he has gone through the fiery trials that await him, he will be greatly exalted.

Verse 14

“My people” is not in the text. The NET reads “(just as many were horrified by the sight of you) he was so disfigured he no longer looked like a man.” This servant of Yahweh will be beaten severely though not as a punishment for his disobedience. For what reason is this servant beaten?

Verse 15

Hebrew experts mostly agree that “sprinkle” should be translated “startle” (cf. NAB, NET, LXX, RSV, NRSV, NJB, JPS). This human has been so disfigured, so marred, so irreversibly damaged that his sight is shocking to the eye. Indeed the nations reel at him, and kings shut their mouths.

Isaiah 53:1

Who would even believe this message? “Nothing is more outrageous than to hear that God’s sinless Son would die on behalf of all people. This story is the ultimate stumbling block for those looking for a Messiah who would come as a conquering king.”¹

“We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24; see also John 12:37-43 and Romans 10:16)

Verse 2

This man did not grow up in the palaces of royalty. He is not to be compared to those great cedars of Lebanon but rather to a mere shoot off a branch—something that would normally be considered common and even expendable. He is not like the oaks of Bashan flourishing in a forest of hospitable conditions, but rather he is a root surrounded by the hostility of parched ground—one who was not prideful but fully acquainted with the struggle for survival. Even so he grew up before Him—God—which is to say that he lived his whole life in the presence and under the watchful eye of the Almighty.

¹ Pastor Steve Taylor of Lakeshore Bible Church, Tempe Arizona, Sermon Notes from March 9th, 2008.

Yet, his appearance was common, easily confused with other men of his time. In such a way, Jesus was able to slip into the crowds and elude the grasp of the authorities. So indistinct were his features that Judas while betraying him found it necessary to kiss him as a sign to his adversaries that he was the one they wanted. He is not like the stars of our age, who would be disqualified up front unless they have artificially whitened teeth, a fashionable haircut, a lean figure, and a beauty that instantly grabs the eye. He is common. He is one of us. He is not in the minuscule minority of pretty people, but one who fits in with the majority.

Verse 3

He is not the winner of American Idol or any other such popularity contest; rather, he is the one who would receive the least number of votes because he is despised and forsaken. Unlike Herod Antipas (the ruler in Galilee) who constantly courted Rome's approval while seeking after the love of the people, this one does not woo the crowds.

He is a "man of sorrows," acquainted not with sumptuous meals of the sagging dinner table of the wealthy, but with grief. One who saw him was more likely to pass him over than esteem him to be someone great. Even his own people did not receive him.

"He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."
(John 1:11)

Verse 4

He began doing this in his ministry through healing (Matthew 8:16-17) but completed the work in his crucifixion. He is not doing this for his own benefit; he is doing something for us. Our infirmities, our pain, our grief, and our sorrows he carries on his shoulders. Even so, we do not recognize that this is what is happening. Instead of gratitude, we look at the pitiful figure and say, "Surely he is cursed by God, what must he have done to deserve this?" (See Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13.) All the while, we do not realize that it is our own pain written across his face.

The meaning of the cross in first century Judea was much different than it is today when we wear crosses around our necks and for other decorative purposes. Prior to Jesus' crucifixion, the cross was regarded as a horrifying site, a public display of Rome's power over life and death. It was a deterrent to anyone who dared buck the ultimate authority of Caesar. It was designed to be extremely painful and humiliating. The person was typically hung naked. Even the word "crux" could not be uttered at the dinner table because it called to mind a disgusting image.

Verse 5

He was pierced through, crushed because of the sin of others. It was not for any crime of his own that he was beaten. He was at once innocent but also entered into solidarity with us. He endured the chastening (punishment) that makes us well. It was for our benefit that he endured blow after blow from the scourge. Yet, somehow by this process, he was not merely wounded, but we are also healed.

Verse 6

We have not kept the law of God as we should have. We have not served God with all our hearts, all of our mind, all of our strength, all of our being, all the time. We have gone astray; each and every one of us has turned to our own way. We have defiled ourselves with our willing rebellion, our pride, our wicked heart that cries out “no one will rule over me. I can do this on my own. I don’t need anyone to tell me what to do.” Through such efforts we have shaken our fist in the face of our Creator and separated ourselves from Him. In an effort to break free, we find ourselves slaves to sin and addicted to self-destruction—a way of life that ends in our own defeat.

But God does not leave us in such a pathetic state of affairs! Just when we were crushing under the weight of our own selfish sins, God in an act of outrageous mercy lifted the mountain of guilt and allowed it to fall on His servant. Yahweh in His astounding love for us has caused this iniquity which we thought we could bear to fall on the shoulders of one who truly can bear it.

Verse 7

The usual cries of complaint and murmurs of injustice that one would expect did not pass by his lips. He was oppressed and afflicted by the consequences of other’s actions, yet he would not open his mouth. He did not avenge himself, nor did he seek from God that his vengeance would fall on his enemies. He kept his mouth closed, staggering the world with his silence. When brought before kings, he would not even seek to defend himself. He knew what awaited him; yet, he did not seize upon a private moment with the willing procurator to secure for himself an escape route from the plan of his God.

“And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.” (Matthew 27:12-14)

He is not a masochist, as if he enjoyed pain, but a volunteer who knows what must be done. He had already begged his Father to find another way, any other way, to achieve the necessary result (Matthew 26:39, 42, 44). The answer was “No.” This was the only way. He had to drink the cup to the dregs if the Father’s will would be done.

Verse 8

“Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away, and who would have thought any more of his destiny? When he was cut off from the land of the living, and smitten for the sin of his people” (NAB)

“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.” (NET)

He was led away after a mock trial fit either for someone so guilty as not to need an authentic trial or else someone so difficult to prove guilty that he must be rushed through the motions of “justice” quickly and under the cover of night, lest others be made aware of his innocence. And who was there to advocate for him? Who sounded the alarm of injustice loud and clear? Even his own disciples had left him, fleeing for fear of their own arrest. Even Peter, the stalwart hero, did not stand up for him but denied him over and over again until he ran off into the night sobbing and ashamed of his cowardice.

His suffering, his wounds, his torture brought his body beyond the point of remedy. With many stripes upon his back and nails through his hands and feet, he continued past the point of no return. With all the violence of a world drunk with pride and blinded by its own rage, he (this servant of Yahweh) absorbed it all.

“While being reviled, he did not revile in return; while suffering, he uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *himself* to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).

He was brought to the brink of the pit and stared deeply into it. Then he whispered, “It is finished” and he bowed his head, exhaling his last breath (John 19:30).

Verse 9

He had not broken the law of God, nor was he even deceitful, for he had no reason to be deceptive. He had done no violence; never had he assaulted others though he had received the fiercest attack.

“They intended to bury him with criminals, but he ended up in a rich man's tomb” (NET).

Since he had done nothing wrong, it was only fitting that Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb which had been hewn out in the rock (Mark 15:42-46).

Verse 10

Yahweh was pleased to crush him not because He enjoyed the process but because of the incalculable good that would result from this voluntary action. This is no case of divine child abuse but the horrifying result of our own sin meeting the wrath of a holy God, hungry for redemption, not blood.

Furthermore, it is essential to stress that this servant of Yahweh volunteers for this work. The language is conditional: “If he would render himself as a guilt offering...,” which indicates that he had a choice. We are not observing a case where someone was being forced to be the scapegoat against his will. He was not someone who was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Jesus did not merely fall victim to the volatile political paranoia of a vicious Roman procurator, nor did he unwittingly fall into the trap of conspiring, jealous, religious leaders. He was not crucified just because men hated him. It was the will of the Father to crush him, to put him to grief. This was the plan from the beginning (Genesis 3:15).

²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- ²³ this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death." (Acts 2:22-23).

He will be the guilt offering (or his life is given as an offering for sin cf. NAB) calls to mind the sacrificial system of the law under which Jesus lived and died. In order to expiate for the sins of the people, an animal would be killed and offered to God on the altar. Similarly, Jesus through his work on the cross nullified the guilt of the people and redeemed them with his blood.

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals; for you were slain, and purchased for God with your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." (Revelation 5:9-10)

Even though he offered his life (lit. soul) as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring. This indicates that he will not stay dead, for the dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5), nor are they capable of observing what is done under the sun (Ecclesiastes 9:10). In order for him to see his offspring, his seed, he must somehow live again. And when this occurs, the good pleasure of Yahweh will prosper in his hand. He will carry out the desires of God. One day, the will of God will be done on earth as in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Verse 11

When the work is completed, the servant will look back upon what has been done, difficult though it was, and be satisfied in it because by his suffering many have been justified—declared righteous—and their iniquities which they could not atone for have been lifted from them.

⁶ ...our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin." (Romans 6:6-7)

Verse 12

He will be given the ultimate inheritance. Because he poured out his soul to death and though not a transgressor was numbered among them, he will be exalted. His disciples fulfilled the role of transgressors by bringing two swords (Luke 22:37-38), and he was regarded as such while on the cross since the men on either side were transgressors.

Results of the Cross

Although it is undeniably true that the servant's suffering was for our sake, freeing us from sin (Romans 8:3-4) and the power of the devil (Hebrews 2:14-15) and the Old Covenant (Hebrews 9:13), it is also true that the cross is our example to follow.

1 Peter 2:19-25

¹⁹ For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. ²¹ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²² WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; ²³ and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. ²⁵ For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

See also Philippians 2:5-8; Ephesians 5:1-2, 25; Hebrews 12:1-4.