

Isaiah Chapter 52

Verses 1-12: The theme of God's deliverance for His people now reaches its greatest expression in the Servant of the Lord who will suffer for the sins of His people. The prophet foresees the Millennium, when Jerusalem will once again be "the holy city," and the "uncircumcised and the unclean" (unrighteous), will no longer enter her gates.

The reference to the "beautiful ... feet of him that bringeth good tidings" is repeated in the New Testament (Rom. 10:15; Eph 6:15). To bring good tidings (mebaser), means to "preach" or "carry; good news." It certainly anticipates the gospel (good news), of the New Testament and results in "peace" and "salvation."

Verses 1-2: "Thy strength ... beautiful garments": A call is given for Zion to awake from drunkenness and clothe herself in garments of honor and dignity provided by the Lord. Foreign invaders will no longer control the city at the time of her final restoration.

Isaiah 52:1 "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."

God has restored Jerusalem to the Israelites. They have returned from captivity, and God is expressing here, the need for them to take their rightful place as God's people. They should be strengthened by the knowledge that God is their Protector. Their strength originates in their faith in God.

The beautiful garments are possibly, speaking of garments that will show the world who their God is. It could be the garment of holiness. We know that the beautiful garment of the High Priest was worn when he was representing God to the people. The world should be able to look at them and see they are on God's side.

The "uncircumcised" are speaking of worldly people. True believers in Christ are circumcised in their hearts.

Romans 2:29 "But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God."

Jerusalem is the holy city of God. Only believers are to come there.

Isaiah 52:2 "Shake thyself from the dust; arise, [and] sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

Their captivity had been a dry and a thirsty land. They were to shake off the past and live for the future. The bands of thy neck had been the bands of bondage. They are no longer in bondage. They must accept their freedom and rise above the past.

Isaiah 52:3 "For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money."

“Sold yourselves for nought ... redeemed without money”: The Jews became the servants of their foreign conquerors, who paid nothing for Israel, so the Lord will redeem Israel gratuitously from sin (45:13; 55:1).

The enemy, Babylon, had not bought the people. They were taken in battle. They will not be purchased back either. They will regain their freedom when Babylon falls. There was no money exchanging hands either way.

We Christians, have been bought with a price, and it was the shed blood of Jesus. God has spoken it, and it is so.

Isaiah 52:4 "For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause."

The first time they went into Egypt, was a voluntary act upon their part to find food for their families. Of course, God sent them there to cause them to seek Him. They were cruelly treated while in Egypt. They worked as slaves, until God sent Moses to get them.

They were again carried into Egypt under the evil Assyrian kings, and God delivered them. They were captured by the Babylonians also. All of these things happened, because God was teaching them a lesson.

Isaiah 52:5 "Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day [is] blasphemed."

“They who rule over them”: A reference to the Babylonians and their cruelty to captive Israelites.

“My name continually ... is blasphemed”: Foreign rulers despised the God of Israel as long as His people were in bondage. God delivered His people, not for their goodness, but for the sake of His holy name, to prove He was truthful, faithful, and powerful (Ezekiel 20:9, 14).

Paul sited the blasphemy to Israel’s God that resulted from the hypocrisy of first century Jews not applying to themselves the standards of God that they knew and taught others (Romans 2:24).

For God's people to be in captivity, would be like saying God was not strong enough to deliver them. Of course, this was not the reason at all. God sent them there to repent and return to Him.

The captivity, in all cases, was cruel and caused them to cry out to God to help them. The minute they cried out to God, He heard them and soon after came to their rescue.

Isaiah 52:6 "Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore [they shall know] in that day that I [am] he that doth speak: behold, [it is] I."

“In that day that I am he”: After the Day of the Lord, when Israel experiences deliverance from their worldwide dispersion, she will recognize the fulfillment of prophecies through Isaiah and others and enjoy full assurance that the Lord had spoken and fulfilled His promises of deliverance. They will connect these events with the great “I AM” (43:11; Exodus 3:13-15).

The purpose in all of this was so that God's people would realize who He Is. They were spiritual adulterers before the captivity. God teaches them to respect and know His name above all other names.

Isaiah 52:7 "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

“How beautiful ... good tidings”: Messengers will traverse the mountains around Jerusalem to spread the good news of the return of redeemed Israel to the Land. Paul broadened this millennial reference to the preaching of the gospel in the kingdom to include spreading the gospel of God’s grace from the time of Jesus Christ on (Romans 10:15; Eph. 6:15).

“Good ... salvation ... thy God reigneth”: The good news pertains to the ideal conditions of Israel’s golden age, during which Christ will reign personally over His kingdom (24:23; Psalm 93:1).

We see in this that their deliverance was not because they deserved it, but because God loved them. Jesus redeemed all believers while they were yet sinners. Jesus brought the good news of the Gospel into the world. Certainly, the feet that carry that message to the world are beautiful.

Jesus is peace, He is salvation, He is King of kings. Zion (the church), does have a King that reigns, and His name is Jesus. Our God truly reigns. "Reigneth" means continually reigns.

Romans 10:15 "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

The message is Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the hope of all who believe.

Isaiah 52:8 "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion."

“Shall see eye to eye” (see Numbers 14:14). This Hebrew expression portrayed two people so close to each other that they can look into one another’s eyes. The point is that the messengers of the truth (“watchmen”), will see the Lord return to Zion (a better translation), as vividly as they see each other looking eye to eye.

This is a strange statement. I believe it is speaking of those who watch over Zion. Remember, Zion can be Jerusalem, or the church. A "watchman" is someone who keeps constant alert about a specific thing.

We know in Jerusalem today, there are old Jewish leaders who are watching for the coming Messiah. It would be a joyous thing for the watchman to see God's people come back into Jerusalem.

We also know, that the angels in heaven are constantly watching the happenings of God's people here on the earth. They rejoice when even one sinner comes to Christ. Angels are ministering spirits.

Hebrews 1:13-14 "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Verses 9-10: "Comforted ... redeemed": The ruined city will respond to the call to sing for joy because the Lord has provided comfort (40:1-2; 49:13; 51:12), and redemption (41:14; 43:1, 12, 14; 44:6, 23-24; 47:4).

Isaiah 52:9 "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem."

God redeemed Jerusalem, when they were not worthy to be forgiven. The best thing to do is to praise Him for the gift He gave them. The sacrifice we make to Him now is praise.

Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name."

Isaiah 52:10 "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

"All of the nations" see the power of God (naked arm). This Arm actually symbolizes Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Salvation through Jesus Christ is offered to the whole world.

Isaiah 52:11 "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean [thing]; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD."

"Depart ... depart": The prophet commands the Israelites to leave the lands of their exiles to return to Jerusalem (48:20; Jer. 50:8; Zech. 2:6-7; Rev. 18:4). Under Cyrus there was only a limited return (50,000), but the final fulfillment in view here is in the future.

“Touch no unclean thing ... be ye clean”: Returning exiles were not to defile themselves by taking property home from their exile (Joshua 6:18; 7:1). The New Testament gave these prophetic words an application in principle by using them as an exhortation forbidding Christians to involve themselves with spiritual ties to forces of heathendom (2 Cor. 6:17).

This going out is speaking of Babylon, but is also speaking of separating oneself from an evil world. When a person is saved, he must separate himself from the world. God wants His people to be holy, as He is holy.

Those that “bear the vessels” are the ministers for God.

Isaiah 52:12 "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel [will be] your rearward."

“Not go out with haste”: Delivered captives will not have to hurry in their return to Jerusalem, as their ancestors did when delivered from Egypt. They can move deliberately and safely, with the Messiah in front and God in back (58:8).

"Rearward" means to gather for any purpose. It also means take away, or remove. The presence of God went before the children of Israel, when they wandered in the wilderness.

Jesus made the way open for us, as well. He leaves a path for us to walk in. He is our leader.

Verses 52:13 to 53:12: This is the last and most memorable of the four Messiah/Servant-songs (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11). This section contains unarguable, incontrovertible proof that God is the author of Scripture and Jesus is the fulfillment of messianic prophecy.

The details are so minute that no human could have predicted them by accident and no imposter fulfilled them by cunning. Clearly, this refers to Messiah Jesus, as the New Testament attests. It is often alluded to without being quoted.

Verses 13-15: These verses actually stand as the introduction to the prophecy of the Suffering Servant (in chapter 53). The subject of both passages is the “servant” of the Lord individualized as the Messiah who suffers for our sins. He is the culmination of all of Isaiah’s messianic prophecies.

He is the Branch (11:1), who springs up out of the stump of the Davidic line. He is the new David (9:7), who will bring in a new Exodus and a new redemption for the people of Israel. Further, He is the One who deserves to rule the world because He is the One who suffers redemptively for all humanity.

The terms “exalted and extolled, and be very high” are used only (in 33:10 and here), but nowhere else in the prophets. It refers to the ultimate and final exaltation of His spiritual glory. Thus He will not remain in the humiliation which is described here but will rise above it (Phil.

2:9-11). There is a deliberate contrast between the “many” who are “astonished”, and the “kings” who will “shut their mouth at him”.

The idea that both the common man and those in charge, will stand speechless in awe of Him. His “visage” refers to His appearance (or face), which will become so “marred” (disfigured), by beatings and scourging that He will be barely recognizable.

The verb for “shall he sprinkle”, is a technical term found in the Mosaic Law for the sprinkling of blood in order to cleanse or purify from sin.

This reference has nothing to do with water baptism. Here the Servant of the Lord is viewed as our High Priest who offers His own blood for our sins. Before this Suffering Servant, the nations of the world are rendered speechless as they observe this unbelievable demonstration of God’s love.

Here is a summary and preview of the humiliation and exaltation of the Servant, described in more detail (in 53:1-12). The details cover the work of Christ in His substitutionary death, His burial, His resurrection, His saving of sinners, His intercession, and His kingdom.

Isaiah 52:13 "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."

Isaiah prophetically uses the title “Servant” to designate Christ, especially concerning His suffering for sin. That suffering is identified as both vicarious (53:4-9), and victorious (53:10-12). The title “Servant of the Lord” emphasizes Christ’s faithful obedience to the Father during His earthly ministry (John 5:19).

The Servant passages in Isaiah were some of the key texts used in preaching the gospel in the early days of Christianity (Acts 8:32-35).

"Extolled" means to lift. The Servant here is Jesus. Jesus is lifted up. He is exalted above all else. At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Isaiah 52:14 "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:"

“His visage was so marred”: The Servant must undergo inhuman cruelty to the point that He no longer looks like a human being. His appearance is so awful that people look at Him in astonishment.

Jesus was not outstandingly beautiful in the flesh. He had His flesh torn severely before the crucifixion. When He took the sin of the world upon His body, the sin was ugly.

People were astonished that this very Jesus was actually the Son of God, who would save the world.

Isaiah 52:15 "So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for [that] which had not been told them shall they see; and [that] which they had not heard shall they consider."

“Sprinkle many nations”: In His disfigured state, the Servant will perform a priestly work of cleansing not just Israel, but many outside the nation (Exodus 29:21; Lev. 4:6; 8:11; 14:7; Num. 8:7; 19:18-19; Heb. 9:13).

This sprinkling, I believe to be purification through His blood. His blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness. We put on His robe of righteousness washed in His blood and made white as snow.

“Shut their mouths”: At His exaltation, human leaders in the highest places will be speechless and in awe before the once despised Servant (Psalm 2). When He takes His throne, they will see the unfolding of power and glory such as they have never heard. Paul applied the principle in this verse to this apostolic mission of preaching the gospel of Christ where Christ was yet unknown (Romans 15:21).

They had not heard of God's great love for mankind before. His love was so great, that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The hard thing for them, and us, to understand is the great love of God for all mankind.

Isaiah Chapter 52 Questions

1. What does this Scripture promise to the exiled Israelites?
2. What should be their strength?
3. What are the beautiful garments?
4. When did the High Priest wear his beautiful garment?
5. Who are the "uncircumcised" of verse 1?
6. What is verse 2 telling them to shake off?
7. How had Babylon obtained these people of God?
8. What have we Christians been bought with?
9. Why had Jacob's family gone into Egypt the first time?
10. What was different about the Babylonian captivity?
11. Why had God allowed His people to go into captivity?

12. The captivity of God's people sent what message to the outside world?
13. What caused them to cry out to God?
14. Why did God deliver them?
15. Name some things that Jesus is.
16. What does "reigneth" mean?
17. What is the message?
18. Who does the author believe verse 8 is speaking to?
19. What is a "watchman"?
20. God redeemed His people, when they were not worthy. What can His people do for Him?
21. What does the "arm" in verse 10, symbolize?
22. Who are "those that bear the vessels"?
23. What does "rearward" mean?
24. What does "extolled" mean?
25. The sin on Jesus' body on the cross was _____.
26. What does the author believe the sprinkling in verse 15, to be?