

# ISAIAH

## Chapter 52

*The LORD's Coming Salvation*

**Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. 2 Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. 3 For thus says the LORD: “You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.” 4 For thus says the Lord GOD: “My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing. 5 Now therefore what have I here,” declares the LORD, “seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail,” declares the LORD, “and continually all the day my name is despised. 6 Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am.” 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” 8 The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. 9 Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. 10 The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 11 Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. 12 For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.**

**52:1** *Awake, awake ... clothe ... with strength.* Asked by fainthearted saints to “awake” from apparent unconcern for His people (51:9), the Lord again directs them to rouse themselves from the stupor of despair (51:17) and to awake from the nightmare of hopelessness. (TLSB)

*Strength.* People are identified by their clothing, which signifies their relationships to other and the character of their calling (e.g., priestly garments, armor). (TLSB)

*beautiful garments.* Priestly garments. This reassures Israel that they can go back to communing with their God. (TLSB)

*uncircumcised and unclean.* Foreign invaders. Babylonian conquerors did not observe the rites provided by God in His covenant with Israel. (TLSB)

**52:2** *Shake yourself from the dust.* Contrast the fate of Babylon in 47:1. (CSB)

Instead of sitting in the dust like Babylon (47:1), Zion may rise from it. (TLSB)

*seated.* Settled in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*loose the bonds from you neck.* Captives were sometimes bound together at the neck. (TLSB)

*Daughter of Zion.* A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

**52:3** *sold for nothing.* The enemy paid the Lord nothing for acquiring Jerusalem. (CSB)

This thought, repeated in vv 4–5, underscores God’s sovereign control of history and the unmerited goodness of His redemption. When He “sold” them (50:1), their masters had no permanent claim to their prey. (TLSB)

Persian ruler Cyrus would send the exiles home. Israel would be redeemed through the sacrifice of the Servant, ultimately fulfilled through the sacrifice of Jesus. (TLSB)

**52:4** *Assyria ... oppressed them.* Destroyed and exiled the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC (2 Lgs 17). (TLSB)

*for nothing.* Without discernible guilt. (TLSB)

**52:5** Quoted in part in Ro 2:24. (CSB)

*here.* In Babylon, the scene of Israel’s disgrace. (TLSB)

*for nothing.* The word נִדְּבָה properly means “led astray” and refers to ungodly teachers who by means of their own ways and teachings draw people away from Christ to themselves, since it is the characteristic of all false teachers to seek their own glory and to draw men to themselves. They do not perform the office of John but rather draw disciples after themselves, as Paul says (Acts 20:30). This is the meaning of the statement *My people are taken away for nothing*, that is, they have been led astray by ungodly Pharisees. This is what He is complaining about here: They are turning them into apostates. (Luther)

*my name is despised.*† The captivity brought disrespect to the God of exiled Jerusalem (see Eze 36:20–23). Cf. Assyria’s blasphemy in 37:23–24. (CSB)

Leaders cry out but fail to call on the Lord for help. (TLSB)

**52:6** *know my name.* Not only the appellation “Lord” but what the great “I Am” did and said to reveal Himself. (TLSB)

*in that day.*† To know that name is to acknowledge and accept the way of salvation revealed by Him. (TLSB)

**52:7** *How beautiful.* St Paul quotes from this verse to show the necessity of proclaiming the Gospel if it is to be of any benefit (Rm 10:15). (TLSB)

*feet of those who bring good news.* A reference to messengers who ran from the scene of a battle to bring news of the outcome to a waiting king and people (see 2Sa 18:26). Here the news refers to the return from exile, a deliverance that prefigures Christ’s deliverance from sin. See Ro 10:15; Eph 6:15. (CSB)

Isaiah had just prophesied God’s gracious deliverance of his people. In these verses, he describes the deliverance as though it has already occurred. Messengers sped forward with the good news. Their feet were beautiful because their feet carried great good news. Three terms summarize the content of their message: peace, good tidings, and salvation. (PBC)

*publishes peace* – Hbr *shama*’, “to hear” or “to cause to hear.” Israel’s creed was such an announcement (Dt 6:4–9). (TLSB)

Peace does not refer to the end of hostilities with the warring nations that surround God’s people. This peace has a meaning much deeper and more profound. It is the peace that God has established between his people and himself. God no longer burns with anger toward his people. He has removed their sin so that a condition of deep well-being exists between God and his people. This peace rests on the knowledge that the Great Servant would come to achieve it by his work on earth. (PBC)

This is “wholeness” that Yahweh gives to the whole man. God is a God of peace (Lev. 26:6; Judges 6:24). God faithfully keeps His covenant of peace (Is 54:10). The “Prince of Peace... will reign on David’s throne” forever (Is 9:6-7). “The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him” (Is 53:5). Jesus brings God’s unique peace (John 14:27). Through the cosmic Christ, God was pleased “to reconcile to Himself all things by making peace through His blood” (Col 1:20). Christ “our peace” has broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-17). The Gospel is the “good news of peace” (Acts 10:36). Faith in Christ produced by the Good News, apprehends peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1). As we commit our anxieties to Him, the “peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

*salvation*. God alone is Savior (Is. 43:11), and His salvation comes only in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

*Your God reigns!* † See Ps 96:10. The return of God’s people to Jerusalem emphasizes his sovereign rule over the world, evident to all at the second coming of Christ (see Rev 19:6). (CSB)

The fall of Israel’s enemies brings words of good news. (TLSB)

**52:8** *watchmen*. Those in Jerusalem watching for the arrival of the messengers (cf. 62:6–7; 2Sa 18:24–27). (CSB)

Prophets (Ezk 33:1–9; Hab 2:1–4). (TLSB)

When the watchmen on the city wall see the messenger and hear the good news, they shout for joy. God appointed the prophets as watchmen (ez 3:17; 33:7). Today the role is carried out by pastors. Israel (the church) is to “listen” as the messenger “shout for joy.” The pastor’s joyful shouting sets the mood for the whole congregation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

*eye to eye*. As clearly as when a person looks squarely into the eyes of another (cf Nu 14:14). (TLSB)

The fulfillment includes Judah’s return from captivity in Babylon, the first come of the Great Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ, in humility, and the second coming of the glorified Lord in power and majesty. All of these arrivals are blended into one vision, and all of them bring great joy. Even the ruins of Jerusalem are encouraged to “burst into songs of joy together.” (PBC)

**52:9** *Break forth together in singing*. This is an admonition to sing praises for that blessing of the Gospel. (Luther)

**52:10** *holy arm.* God’s arm is often associated with redemption and salvation (see Ex 6:6). (CSB)

The power of the Lord is terrifying for impenitent sinners but joy for those declared holy in His sight (cf 6:5; 33:17, 22; Ex 24:9–11; 1Co 13:12; 1Jn 3:2; Rv 22:4). (TLSB)

The Lord “rolled up His sleeves” many times and redeemed His people “with an outstretched arm” (Ex 6:6 cf. Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19). His mercy combined with His right hand, won for Israel victory (Ps. 44:3) and rescued them as His inheritance (Deut 9:29). Because He saved His people with His outstretched arm, He is worthy of worship (2 Kings 17:36) and praise (Ps 98:1) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

In the incarnation Yahweh hides His strong arm in the gentle hand of a child. He works a mighty deliverance through weakness. That reaches its climax as Christ’s arms are nailed to the cross. But make no mistake, He is God’s powerful “horn of salvation” (Luke 1:69), revealed not just to Israel, but to the Gentiles as well (Is. 9:1-3; 42:1-6; Mt 4:15-16; 12:18-21; Luke 2:32). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

*all the ends of the earth.* Equivalent to “all mankind” in 40:5. Cf. 45:22. (CSB)

Also called “all flesh” (40:5; 49:26; 66:16, 24). (TLSB)

**52:11** *Depart, depart!* That is, from the world. “Depart from the realm of sin and of conscience, embrace the Gospel, walk in the light while you have it (cf. John 12:35). Now is the day of salvation. The time will come when it will depart.” We must work while we have time, and we must not permit this time to slip away. The flesh does not receive this. It does not want to believe this unless the flesh and its property and riches are safe. (Luther)

*there.* Babylon. (TLSB)

*unclean thing.* Perhaps referring to pagan religious objects (cf. Ge 31:19; 35:2). (CSB)

Levitical institutions are back in effect (Nu 1:50–53). (TLSB)

This is a proverb from the law of Moses. He is here not speaking of dead bodies and Mosaic pollution, but he wants us to depart from all faithlessness so that we do not soil our conscience with wicked teaching. (Luther)

*you.* Levites. (TLSB)

*you bear the vessels.* Cyrus allowed the people to take back the articles of the temple seized by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezr 1:7–11). The priests and Levites were responsible for them (see Nu 3:6–8; 2Ch 5:4–7). (CSB)

Cyrus permitted the exiles to take with them “the vessels of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem” (Ezr 1:7). (TLSB)

**52:12** *not go out in haste.* Return from the Babylonian exile, recalling the deliverance from Egypt, was quite different in many ways (Dt 16:3). (TLSB)

The reason why they must be clean is remarkable. It is given in Deut. 6:21 ff. and Ex. 12 ff. They went out from Egypt greatly afflicted and terrified. It shall not be done in this way now. *Haste,*

רָצַף, that is, hurry and hopelessness coupled with fear. But here he does not want us to hasten. It is natural for all of us to be afraid and to hasten, for anyone who is afflicted is in a hurry to be liberated through his own works and by his own resources. (Luther)

*flight.* Israel may leave Babylon in peace, so secure is their salvation. (TLSB)

*go before you ... be your rear guard.* As he did for the Israelites when they were freed from Egypt (see Ex 13:21; 14:19–20; cf. Isa 42:16; 49:10; 58:8). (CSB)

Instead of the Levites being the front and rear guard of the holy vessels, the Lord Himself will do this, just as He did with the pillar of cloud and fire in the exodus (Ex 14:19–20). (TLSB)

**52:1–12** Final announcement that the exiles will return home in safety to serve the Lord. When the Lord calls and equips you for service, loose your bonds of fear and doubt. God’s gifts and calling will suffice for you, and He will protect you. • Lead me forth, O Lord. Block my retreat from Your calling, for You reign on my behalf. Amen. (TLSB)

*He Was Pierced for Our Transgressions*

**13 Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. 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.**

**52:13–53:12** The fourth and longest of the four servant songs (see note on 42:1–4). It constitutes the central and most important unit in chs. 40–66 as well as in chs. 49–57 (see note on 39:8). The song contains five stanzas of three numbered verses each. It is quoted more frequently in the NT than any other OT passage and is often referred to as the “gospel in the OT.” (CSB)

Here believers stand on “holy ground” (Ex 3:5) and in the Most Holy Place of salvation’s temple. This “vision of Isaiah” (Is 1:1) says what believers feel when, in spirit, they stand at the foot of Golgotha’s cross: penitent sorrow for their part in wounding Jesus, the “man of sorrows” (53:3); humble gratitude that “the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity” (53:6) for which they should have endured the torments of hell. (TLSB)

In the Fourth Servant Song, Isaiah does not mention any of the major characters that have appeared earlier in chapters 40–55: Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, Israel, Babylon, or Cyrus. Nor does he refer to the participants that will appear in the next chapters, the woman who personifies the city (54:1–17b) or the people (54:17c–55:13). Instead, he speaks of “my [Yahweh’s] Servant (52:13, 53:11), and as Isaiah wraps up chapters 40–55, the only name that endures is Yahweh (55:13). (CC)

In the original language, Hebrew, this chapter is divided into five paragraphs of three verses each. An outline could go this way: (LL)

- Exalted (52:13–15)
- Despised (53:1–3)
- Wounded (53:4–6)
- Cut Off (53:7–9)
- Satisfied (53:10–12)

**52:13 52:13** Begins the last of Isaiah's four Servant Songs (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12) and is parallel with 53:12—in this way the Servant's "exaltation" is at the beginning and end of His ministry. Paul equates this with Christ's preincarnate state of being God (Php 2:6) as well as his final state at His second coming, when "every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11; cf Ac 2:33; 3:13; Eph 1:20–23). Luth: "Here we begin chapter 53. Until now you have heard Christ's kingdom depicted in the cross and that it is carried forward by faith and the Word alone. Yet that leading of faith, the Word, and the cross is not without deliverance and protection. In this chapter the prophet speaks primarily of the Head of the Kingdom as he treats of the person of the King and the manner of His deliverance This is the foremost passage on the suffering and resurrection of Christ, and there is hardly another like it. Therefore we must memorize this passage.... This is what the text says: This King will be glorious, but after His death. This indicates that this King is different from an ordinary one, since He will begin His reign after death" (AE 17:215). (TLSB)

*my servant.*† The Messiah. (CSB)

*act wisely.* A mark of God's blessing (see 1Sa 18:14) and of obedience to God's word (see Jos 1:8). The Messianic King will "reign wisely" (Jer 23:5). Cf. 53:10. (CSB)

They are said to act wisely who carry an important and extremely dangerous matter through to its conclusion in such a way that they nowhere do violence to it. The political ruler needs this wisdom to take note of all dangers, beware of all snares, and bring everything to a successful conclusion. So Matt. 10:16 reads: "Be wise as serpents." Now, the serpent is a shrewd animal, involving itself in violence and craftiness. Summary: It is incumbent upon the wise man not to rule by violence, not to ram his head through, but in the midst of an even desperate situation to see it through gently and bring everything to an orderly conclusion. Thus Christ will find an exceedingly involved situation. This affair will be imposed on Him in a way to make His task seem entirely impossible, and yet He will handle the matter so successfully that He will dispose of it without force and without danger. He has accomplished it wisely and without noise. (Luther)

So God grades the work of His Son. Success of every sort and description shall be rightly attributed to the Servant. He did His work perfectly. (Leupold)

Shall so act throughout His mission as to secure it the most complete success. (PC)

The verb means that the action has been successfully carried out; it has achieved its desired goal or end. So, as Isaiah tells us, this Servant did not fail to achieve the goal of His mission. He did not fail His heavenly Father. The Servant's crucifixion and death achieved what no amount of gold or silver could – the forgiveness of sins and life eternal for all the world. He has therefore been highly exalted. (PBC)

*be high and lifted up.* Words that describe the Lord in Isaiah's vision. Christ's exaltation is referred to in Ac 2:33; 3:13; Eph 1:20–23; Php 2:9–11 (see also 1Pe 1:10–11). (CSB)

The initial verse of the song anticipates the Servant's vindication and therefore enables us to travel through his "valley of the shadow of death" (Ps. 23:4) until we reach the other side. (CC)

Then, when His first office and ministry have been accomplished, He will be in glory. He will bring it about that even in this life He will arrive at glory after many people have been gathered to Him." But I understand it simply in this way: Here, in the time of his earthly life, He will be Servant. After death He will be Lord. In His life He will be the most prudent Servant. (Luther)

He will remain in the state of humiliation and perish, but will rise out of it. Prevail, and triumph. With three verbs the Spirit precisely foretells the resurrection, the ascension into heaven, and the sitting at the right hand of the Father. (LL)

**52:14** God delivers in ways we do not expect. Jesus, who is both the Davidic Messiah and the Suffering Servant, experiences the most shameful death of the lower class. In the Roman world, crucifixion was generally reserved for slaves and only the most vile criminals. According to the OT, being affixed to a tree was a sign of a divine curse (Deut. 21:22-23; cf. Josh. 8:29; 2 Sam. 21:6-13) and therefore the most unlikely place for divine activity. Israelites might naturally expect Yahweh's Servant to be impressive, tall, and handsome. "My [Yahweh's] plans are not your plans and your ways are not my ways" (55:8) (CC)

The German term *Stellvertretung* focuses upon the related destinies of the Servant and "the many." The word denotes "place-taking" or "in-our-place-ness" and conveys the idea of one person voluntarily taking the place of another. The innocent Servant takes the place of the guilty in such a way that he experiences the full weight of the divine punishment of their sins and yet also somehow blocks them from experiencing it. (CC)

The Servant does not offer a sentimental or syrupy love, but a "love" for us that is as "fierce as death" (Song 8:6). It is driven by nails, marked with scars, and crowned with thorns. This is antithetical to any form of Christianity that offers a God without wrath [who brings people] without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross. (CC)

*astonished at you.* When they saw Christ's suffering on the cross. Cf. the reaction to the ruined city of Tyre (Eze 27:35). (CSB)

The prophet describes the person. But this is the way it will be. The ministry and glorification of Christ will assume such a form that the whole world will be offended because of Him. This glorious King will be in such a form that many will be astonished at Him. I read it thus: Many are offended at Him. The Hebrew  $\text{מִשְׁתַּחֲוִי}$  means to be startled, distorted. The word describes the posture of one about to vomit and of one full of revulsion, because His appearance will be so vile that many will be sick and offended. (Luther)

*marred.* A term used of a "blemished animal," which should not be offered to the Lord (Mal 1:14). Cf. the disgraceful treatment of the servant. (CSB)

His entire appearance had been so disfigured by the extremity of the sufferings to which He was subjected that it was almost beyond comprehension how a human being could endure such an excess of misery. (Kretzmann)

The Suffering Servant is so disfigured and marred that His identity as a human is questioned. (TLSB)

He looks repulsive by comparison with other people. Here you see the glorious King described as a man of the most hideous appearance in opposition to the Jews, who look for Him in a glorious form. It follows therefore that the Messiah is not to be looked for as coming with a physical kingdom, since His appearance is so extremely marred. He is numbered with the transgressors, crucified as a rebel, killed by His own people in supreme disgrace, and the most abandoned of men. His public appearance as of one doing nothing has magnificence. Note, then, that this

Servant will be more disgraceful in the eyes of men than all other men. For that reason the Jews should receive Him, and yet for that reason many are offended because of Him, since His appearance will be so offensive. (Luther)

Appalled, sick, and offended at His appearance, many pass by hurling insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying: “You who are going to destroy the temple and built it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!?” (Matthew 27:39-40) (LL)

The prophet sits at the foot of the cross on Calvary, and see the Redeemer as He hung upon the accursed tree, after He had been buffeted, and crowned with thorns, and smitten, and scourged, and crucified, when His face was covered with bruises and with gore, and His frame and features distorted with agony. (PC)

*beyond that of the children of mankind. Cf. Ps 22:6. His treatment was inhuman. (CSB)*

This repeats what was said above, that His form is more contemptible than that of other sons of men. No one is despised as much as He. (Luther)

He was to be thought of as badly mutilated, more than man could bear; it was suffering that borders on the unthinkable. (Leupold)

**52:15** *sprinkle many nations.* With the sprinkling of cleansing (see Lev 14:7; Nu 8:7; 19:18–19) and/or of consecration (see Ex 29:21; Lev 8:11, 30). (CSB)

Can also be read as “startle,” so the thought of amazement may continue from v 14. (TLSB)

The rejection of the Servant to the point of death (53:8-9, 12) is the means by which he will sprinkle many nations. This passage does not state the substance with which the Servant will “sprinkle” the; other texts with this verb refer to sprinkling of blood, oil, and/or water (e.g., Ex. 9:21; Lev. 4:6, 17; 14:51; Num. 8:7) usually by a priest. In light of the Sinaitic covenant, it is most likely that the Servant is applying sacrificial blood. Moses splashed “the blood of the covenant” on the people to bring them into the covenant of communion with God (Ex. 24:8), and every year the high priest was to “sprinkle” as in (Is. 52:15) blood to forgive Israel’ sins on the Day of the Atonement (Lev. 26:14-15, 19). Since the context of Is. 52:15 speaks of no animal from which blood would come, its source must be the Servant himself. He is the Lamb led to the slaughter (53:7). Therefore it is “the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14; 12:11; cf. 1 Peter 1:19) that is sprinkled on “many nations. (CC)

Here the glory appears again. The prophet proceeds with two members. He says that this Servant is wise and glorious, but there follows another member. He will be without glory and despised. Then follows that His glory will nevertheless be such that He will startle the nations, and the kings will shut their mouths. That is to say, all kings will become ashamed and will know that this King is supreme, and hence they will shut their mouths. They will all humble themselves. Reconcile this contradiction, that all kings regarded themselves as servants with relation to Him. And yet He will be despised and without glory. Therefore Christ’s kingdom is indeed spiritual and ultimately beyond death. *Sprinkle.* This is a Hebraism for “it will be preached.” Sprinkling in the Law denotes preaching, as if to say: “After Christ will have suffered, He will be proclaimed not only among the Jews but also among the Gentiles as water is thrown at and sprinkled on people.” So Peter speaks of “sprinkling with His blood” (1 Peter 1:2) to denote preaching about the blood of Christ. So then we must preach that Christ is both glorious and despised. So Paul preaches Christ alone as misshapen and as crucified. And so He must always be preached, but He



shall nonetheless be received even by kings. This is a powerful text against the Jews. They can refer this preaching to no king but Christ. (Luther)

From such an ignominious beginning His kingdom grows, to the amazement and astonishment of unbelieving Gentiles throughout the world. Christianity today is still the largest single religion in the world. All will bow down before Him and acknowledge Him as Lord, ultimately even those who reject Him. This refers, in the final analysis to the sudden appearance of Christ on the Day of Judgment when the unbelievers in stunned amazement will also acknowledge Him as Lord and God (Matthew 24:30; 25:31-46; Rev:15-17) (LL)

*kings will shut their mouths.* In astonishment at the suffering and exaltation of the servant. *For what ... understand.* † Quoted in Ro 15:21. Even though they have not heard of him before, kings will understand the mission of the servant when they see his humiliation and exaltation (contrast 6:9–10). (CSB)

Prophecy that the nations will see and understand the report (53:2–11) and divine declaration (53:12) that follows, describing God's work through the Servant's suffering. (TLSB)

Paul alludes to this passage when he says that he has not come to Rome because he was kept from it by his preaching in a new place (cf. Rom. 15:22). That place deals with the propagation of the Word, so that His Word might be heard everywhere by kings who shut their mouths. Thus Christ is pictured as being preached even among the Gentiles. Here you clearly see a spiritual kingdom described, one that does not move forward with weapons but with word and recital. So this kingdom of Christ's suffering and resurrection was promoted in the church by preaching alone. (Luther)