

ISAIAH

Chapter 53

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

53:1 Quoted in whole or in part in Jn 12:38; Ro 10:16. (CSB)

has heard from us. The good news about salvation, given by the prophets to Israel and the nations (see 52:7, 10). (CSB)

Over the centuries, the prophets announced the coming salvation, but here the character of God's work of salvation is revealed in shocking detail, continuing the theme of astonishment (52:14). Arthur Just Jr.: "The words are spoken as if announcing events which had already come to pass" (*ANF* 1:256). St Bernard of Clairvaux: "Oh! that they would be wise and understand. But except they believe they shall not understand" (*SLSB*, p 158). (TLSB)

Over the centuries, the prophets announced the coming salvation, but here the character of God's work of salvation is revealed in shocking detail, continuing the theme of astonishment (52:14). "The words are spoken as if announcing events which had already come to pass." Just "Oh! That they would be wise and understand. But except they believe they shall not understand" St Bernard of Clairvaux. (TLSB)

Rejection of the gospel dogged the work of the apostles, and rejection of our witness will occur, even after we have proclaimed the gospel as clearly and eloquently as we can. (PBC)

We are now all the way into the Holy of Holies. The life-drama is about to be described. Isaiah no longer speaks to the unbelieving gentile world, but to the who have been privileged to hear the message of God's plan of salvation over and over again. He is talking to the people of Israel, and also to us. John quotes this verse as being fulfilled in Christ: "Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: 'Lord has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'" (John 12:37-38) (LL)

The problem? Sinful pride. The people of Israel had their own idea of what they needed to be "saved" from and how God ought to do it. They had no need to be personally reconciled to God, for they were "Abraham's children." Traces of that sinful pride all too often also crop up in us. Part of the reason why this happens to us so easily may be because we have never allowed ourselves to really become emotionally involved in the price, the ransom, that God's wrath demanded had to be paid to make us lovable in His sight again. How did the Father do that? His holy hand of justice reached out toward us while we were screaming and hurling insults at His beloved Son. Patiently, and with love that can only be divine, His hand scrapes the filth and muck off of us and plastered it on His Son. Feel that Hand as it scrapes and scrapes until the last of the filth and muck called sin is stripped off of us and plaster on His Beloved. In fact, feel that Hand as it scrapes sin from inside us as well – for our sin is not simply sinful acts, but a sinful heart and nature from which the sinful acts come (Mark 7:21-23). We can't even imagine the horror and revulsion the Father must have felt as He filled His holy, sin-hating hand with our filth and sin. Nor can we even vaguely understand the abhorrence and loathing Christ felt as His sinless, pure and holy body is covered with the sins of the world. How true are the hymn writer's words: "You think of sin but lightly, nor suppose the evil great, here may its nature rightly, here its guilt estimate. Mark the sacrifice appointed; see who bears the awful load; tis the Word the Lord's anointed, Son of Man and Son of God." (LSB 451, V 3) For us! For us! For us! We can only stand in quietness and deep fear as we hear the cry of the damned come from Christ's lips: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46) Understand it or not, that cry tells us that hell has been drained, forgiveness has been earned, peace between God and us is real. (LL)

SEEING the greatness of Christ, the prophet thinks of his fellow Jews, how few there will be to believe this. He had said that almost all would regard Him as an offense. Many Gentiles would receive Him but only a few Jews. For that reason he says here, "Who will ever believe this?" The Jews were indeed disgusted, as we see in the narratives of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. This is what the prophet is bemoaning here, that so offensive an appearance of Christ must be received and respected by the kings. This reception takes place not by reason and its research facilities, but it is brought about solely by the Holy Spirit and the Word. To believe that Christ, so exceedingly disgraced and dying between robbers, is the Savior—this no reason can believe. No more loathsome kind of death can be read about than that which Christ suffered, and to believe in Him under that form as the Messiah and to die in that faith—this is the office of the Holy Spirit. So far the prophet has completed one paragraph concerning Christ as the Servant hanging on the cross, and concerning His completely absurd appearance and concerning His exalted kingdom, so that the kings will shut their mouths. Therefore I conclude that after His death Christ will have an eternal kingdom. (Luther)

arm of the LORD. A mystery why God's arm would appear weak and allow the injury of His own Servant. Cf 40:10; 63:12. (TLSB)

Yahweh's arm denotes his gracious power that does not crush the meek (cf. 442:3), but brings salvation and returns mercy when faced with hatred. This power is manifest in self-sacrifice, humility, and love. (CC)

Many Jews would not see the working of God's providence in the victories of Cyrus or in the decision to which He came to restore the Jews to their own country. Unbelief can always assign the most plainly providential arrangements to happy accident. (PC)

God chose to reveal His power in a way different than what humans expect. The Lord reveals His arm not with lightning, earthquakes, fire or wind, as Elijah learned (1 Kings 19). The Lord did not carry out His plan of salvation with armies, power, high-level diplomacy, parades, fireworks or bands. (PBC)

53:2 *he grew up* – Judged by human standards, the Servant appeared to be the most unlikely agent of a heavenly mission, despised by men as He was. (TLSB)

young plant. The Messiah would grow from the “stump of Jesse.” His beginnings would be humble. (CSB)

Instead of comparing the Servant to a cedar of Lebanon (e.g., 14:8) or one of the seven impressive trees in 41:19, Isaiah says he is a mere sprout or sapling. The NT advances the same idea. A baby born in a barn in backwater Bethlehem was the target of this type of criticism. “Is not this the carpenter's son?” (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3). “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jn. 1:46). But Jesus shook the Roman Empire and turned it upside down (cf. 17:6). (CC)

Here the prophet is still dealing with his prophecy concerning Christ's suffering. He grew up *like a young plant and like a root*. This is remarkable. *Before Him*, he says. He indeed grows up before God, but not in the eyes of the world. This is a metaphor, as if to say, a root does not grow in parched ground. It strikes me as if a lovely sprout were to grow up out of parched earth, that is, a dry Christ cannot possibly accomplish anything good. Trying to draw water from a rock and oil from iron is just as believable as saying that Christ must be splendid and glorious. (Luther)

root. Not a sturdy, deeply rooted tree, but a weak sapling. God let His Son grow up in vulnerable human flesh. The Servant was indeed a shoot from the root of Jesus (11:10). However, the outward kingdom of David's house had been cut down, and in the “dry ground” of the Roman Empire, there was no prospect of its revival. (TLSB)

no form or majesty. He could not show the fullness of His majesty, for then He might be honored and spared the crucifixion. (TLSB)

beauty. The Hebrew for this word is used of David in 1Sa 16:18, where it is translated “fine-looking.” Christ had nothing of the bearing or trappings of royalty. (CSB)

Not that the Servant was ugly, but He appeared common. (TLSB)

Not having form or comeliness means simply to deprive Him of everything, since no robber was completely without form. But here there is to be no form or adornment whatever. (Luther)

“There was nothing to attract us, nothing that we might care for. Everything about Him was repulsive.” See how the prophet toils as he describes His contemptible appearance. It is as if he were saying, “The people treated Him in a most horrible way.” (Luther)

He could not show the fullness of His majesty, for then He might be honored and spared the crucifixion. (TLSB)

The Servant of the Lord had no physical beauty that would mark Him as a leader. Israel chose Saul as its first king. The Scriptures describe him as “an impressive young man, without equal among the Israelites – a head taller than any of the others (1 Samuel 9:2). (PBC)

Not only among the Greek in days of old but practically among all people, beauty was regarded as a kind of prerequisite of greatness. At this juncture of His life the Servant did not meet this requirement. (Leupold)

53:3 Esau “despised” his birthright (Gen. 25:34), while Goliath (1 Sam. 17:42) and Michal (2 Sam. 6:16) both “despised” David. With the same disgust, “we” first scorned the Davidic Servant. Much like Job’s “friends,” the speakers in Is. 53:1-3 were interpreting the Servant’s suffering through the theology of glory, not the theology of the cross. The natural tendency (the opinion legis, “opinion of the Law” ingrained in the human heart) is to judge according to appearances (cf. 1 Sam 16:7; 2Cor. 5:12). A person gets what he deserves: presupposed is the relation of moral causality between sin and physical affliction. So intense is the revulsion that people cover their faces so as not to look at the Servant. (CC)

despised. Betrayed even by His friends. (TLSB)

For *rejected by men* the Hebrew has לָרָץ, “one for whom there is no concern whatever, one from whom all turn away.” This is not an easy suffering. These words cannot be understood as referring to the glory of the Kingdom, nor do they speak of a simple and spiritual suffering. They speak rather of a physical, open, and extremely shameful suffering. Away with the Jews who refuse to admit that this refers to Christ! They imagine two Messiahs. They say that one has come already and is walking around in the world in the garb of a beggar and that a second one is to come in earthly glory. Thus this text compelled them. (Luther)

The prominent people did not seek Him out for advice or even for company. The Messiah would live outside the circle of the rich, famous, and powerful. It has been said that, on the basis of this passage some of ancient rabbis thought the Messiah would have leprosy. (PBC)

rejected ... esteemed. The Hebrew words used here occur together also in 2:22. Cf. Jn 1:10–11. (CSB)

sorrows. The Hebrew for this word is used of both physical and mental pain (see v. 4; Ex 3:7). (CSB)

Not His alone, but the sorrows and condemnation of all people. His grief’s, sorrows, and stripes are not the due reward of His deeds, for “this man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:41). (TLSB)

This does not denote weaknesses but many sicknesses and grief’s. He is a man wounded and beaten, as the following shows. (Luther)

hide their faces. None could bear to see His sorrow or their own guilt reflected in His pain. (TLSB)

The Hebrew is פָּנָיו. *Faces* must be referred to others who saw Him; that is, as often as they saw Christ, they turned away from His wretched face. There was a revulsion of seeing. Here are two paragraphs in which the prophet depicts both the glory of Christ and lack of glory and His suffering. Now follows a third paragraph which shows what Christ would do. (Luther)

We have heard that in these paragraphs there was a description of Christ's person with respect to His suffering and His glorification. This passage forms the basis for the church's faith that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Now follows what He would accomplish by His suffering, whether He suffered for His own sake or for the sake of others. And this is the second part of our understanding and justification, to know that Christ suffered and was cursed and killed, but FOR US. It is not enough to know the matter, the suffering, but it is necessary to know its function. (Luther)

we esteemed him not – The disciples learned that Jesus was the Messiah (Matthew 16:16), but they fled from the horror of His arrest and the cross, which convinced them He was not the Messiah (Luke 24:18-21). (TLSB)

53:4-6 Isaiah asserted the vicarious suffering of the servant of the Lord in these verses. They are among the most treasured words of the Scriptures. One commentator on this passage wrote: “here is revealed the very essence of God's plan of redemption, more plainly than any where else in the OT... The entire NT Gospel of the righteous faith, as St Paul in particular expounded it, rests upon these three verses... These words are all the NT Gospel in a nutshell.” (August Pieper, Isaiah II, pages 438, 439) (PBC)

Video – Medical aspects of Jesus' Suffering
Power Point – On the Physical Death of Jesus

53:4 Quoted in part in Mt 8:17 with reference to Jesus' healing ministry. (CSB)

surely – This word comes first in this verse and become an emphatic signpost marking the important lesson of these verses. (PBC)

The speakers admit that they had misjudged the Servant. The first word “however” – is an adversative denoting amazement. It introduces the poem's third stanza, which portrays the Servant bearing our sin. Commenting on this verse, Luther writes: “His suffering was nothing else than our sin. These words, OUR, US, FOR US, must be written in letters of gold. He who does not believe this is not a Christian.(AE 17:221). (CC)

carried – This extends the idea of carrying to include carrying guilt or the debt of sin. (PBC)

A noun cognate to the verb “to bear, carry,” appears in 46:1, where Babylon deities are ‘burdens...carried’ by animals (cf. 45:20). Israel, on the other hand, has been “carried” and “lifted up” by Yahweh from birth (46:3). Under God's Law, sinners have to “bear, carry” their guilt and consequences for their wrongdoing (in, e.g., Lev. 5:1; 7:18; 17:16; 22:16), but into this gap steps Yahweh's Servant, who “bore” “our sickness” and “carried” “our sufferings” (Is. 53:4). Jesus took upon himself all the ugliness of humanity when sin was imputed to the Sinless One. Luther writes:

And all the prophets saw this, that Christ was to become the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrators, blasphemers, etc., there has never ever been anywhere in the

world. He is not acting in His own Person now. Now He is not the Son of God, born of the Virgin. But He is sinner. (AE 26:277). (CC)

afflicted.† Diseases are ultimately the consequences of original (Adamic) sin. See 1:5–6 and note. (CSB)

Illness and disease are the consequences of sin, which Jesus bore (1Pt 2:24). (TLSB)

Illness and disease are the consequences of sin, which Jesus bore (1 Peter 2:24). (TLSB)

Twelve times over within the space of nine verses he asserts, with the most emphatic reiteration, that all the Servant's sufferings were vicarious, borne for man, to save him from the consequences of his sins, to enable him to escape punishment. (PC)

This states the purpose of Christ's suffering. It was not for Himself and His own sins, but for our sins and grief's. He bore what we should have suffered. Here you see the fountain from which St. Paul draws countless streams of the suffering and merits of Christ, and he condemns all religions, merits, and endeavors in the whole world through which men seek salvation. Note the countless sects who to this day are toiling to obtain salvation. But here the prophet says, "He for us." It is difficult for the flesh to repudiate all its resources, to turn away from self, and to be carried over to Christ. It is for us who have merited nothing not to have regard for our merits but simply to cling to the Word between heaven and earth, even though we do not feel it. Unless we have been instructed by God, we will not understand this. Therefore I delight in this text as if it were a text of the New Testament. This new teaching which demolishes the righteousness of the Law clearly appeared absurd to the Jews. For that reason the apostles needed Scripture. (Luther)

smitten by God.† As when he inflicts a disease (see Ge 12:17; 2Ki 15:5). People thought the servant was suffering for his own sins. (CSB)

Irony is that Israel considered this Servant as stricken by God, but initially failed to realize that His suffering was not for His sins but for the sins of the people. He was not wounded for *His* transgressions or crushed for *His* iniquities but for everyone else's. Ambrose: "Not Your wounds, but mine, hurt You, Lord Jesus; not Your death, but our weakness ... and we, Lord, esteemed You afflicted, when You grieved not for Yourself, but for me" (NPNF 2 10:230). (TLSB)

While He was doing all this, we on our part were still laboring (say these converted Jews) under the misapprehension that, because so heavy burdens lay on the Servant's shoulders, He must be a "marked" man whom God had singled out for unusual punishment because of unusual guilt on His part. (Leupold)

wounded. Or "humbled," or "oppressed" (see v. 7; 58:10). (CSB)

53:5 Several connections to Day of Atonement in vv 4–6, esp the idea of substitutionary atonement (cf Lv 16:21–22). (TLSB)

crushed. See Ps 22:16; Zec 12:10; Jn 19:34. (CSB)

The passive form of this verb indicates that this suffering was inflicted upon Him by others. (PBC)

crushed. In spirit (see Ps 34:18; cf. Isa 57:15). The sins of the world weighed heavily upon him. (CSB)

No stronger expression could be found in Hebrew to denote the severity of suffering – suffering unto death. (PC)

brought us peace – His chastisement is the remedy that brings peace to our conscience. Before Christ there is nothing but disorder. But He was chastised for the sake of our peace. Note the wonderful exchange; One man sins, another pays the penalty; one deserves peace, the other has it. The one who should have peace has chastisement, while the one who should have chastisement has peace. It is a difficult thing to know what Christ is. (Luther)

healed.† Here equivalent to “forgiven.” (CSB)

See how delightfully the prophet sets Christ before us. It is a remarkable plaster. His stripes are our healing. The stripes should be ours and the healing in Christ. Hence this is what we must say to the Christian: “If you want to be healed, do not look at your own wounds, but fix your gaze on Christ.” (Luther)

No human could remove one sinful thought, word, or action by suffering the punishment deserved. Even criminals do not remove the guilt from their record by spending years in prison or even by suffering capital punishment; they only suffer the penalty they deserve. (PBC)

53:6 *we all* – By nature we are like straying sheep, unconcerned about their shepherd. By nature we are unaware of the great events that took place and oblivious to the blessings won for us by the Servant. We wander, each one absorbed in his own way. What a tragic picture of human life! People are often absorbed with themselves, their problems, their joys, and their struggles that they have no time to think about anyone or anything else. Our contemporary world seems to want to stay busy doing things so that it doesn’t have to stop to think about God, death, and sin. Satan has bewitched so many to remain in the state of denial about the real issues of our relationship with God. Our sinful nature becomes his willing ally. (PBC)

We raced from God in rebellion, yet God placed our guilt on the only One who stayed beside Him, the Servant. One innocent Lamb remained, and that Lamb of God received the punishment of the flock that fled. (TLSB)

have gone astray. Cf. Ps 119:176; Jer 50:6; Eze 34:4–6, 16; 1Pe 2:25. (CSB)

The Israelites blamed Yahweh for their exile (40:17). Now they take personal responsibility and own up to their sin. Ignoring Yahweh’s way (e.g., 40:3), they had become like sheep in need of a Shepherd. “For you were straying like sheep but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25 ESV). Commenting on this verse, Luther writes: “Therefore write this text on the foundation in golden letters or in your own blood.” AE 17:225 (CC)

This is the conclusion and confutation of the preceding. There he calls all our labors and endeavors errors. Christ alone was without sin. In this text all the apostles have attacked the religions and the Law itself. *All we have gone astray*. The religions through their own rules and their own way want to load our sins on us and say, “If you will observe these things, you will be free from your sins.” Yet the prophet says that “our sins” and the sins “of all men” have been placed on Christ. (Luther)

every one – Because Christ has nothing from us but death and labor (cf. chapter 43) and we have righteousness and life from Him. (Luther)

laid on him the iniquity of us all. Just as the priest laid his hands on the scapegoat and symbolically put Israel's sins on it (Lev 16:21). See 1Pe 2:24. (CSB)

This confirms our conscience that Christ did not take our sins by His own will but by the will of the Father who had mercy on us. *On Him*, not on us, contrary to every law and order, where whoever sins is punished. Here, however, we have the punishment of our sins on Christ Himself. In public life, however, if anyone sins openly, let him be punished by the magistrate. (Luther)

While mankind, as a whole, was indifferent to Him, rejected and despised Him, He was wonderfully active in our behalf. With emphasis it is stated, "Surely our grief's He has carried, the sufferings which we deserved He has borne in our stead." While we, all men, in the blindness of our self-righteousness, stood back and considered the Sufferer smitten, struck, and afflicted by God, He was taking upon Himself the blame for our crimes, the guilt of our iniquities. Our transgressions were charged to His account, and He was engaged in paying them off. In order that we might again be at peace with God, He took upon Him our chastisement; in order that we might not suffer the bruises and stripes which we had so richly merited, He permitted them to be laid upon Himself. Yea, while we were going astray in our own blindness and willfulness, every one turning to the way which suited his evil nature best, God laid even these crimes and all other iniquities upon Him. Such is the wonderful message of Christ's vicarious suffering. (Kretzmann)

We raced from God in rebellion, yet God place our guilt on the only One who stayed beside Him, the Servant. One innocent Lamb remained, and that Lamb of God received the punishment of the flock that fled. (TLSB)

53:7–8 Verses read by the Ethiopian eunuch in the presence of Philip (Ac 8:32–33). (CSB)

53:7 *oppressed*.† Like Israel. The Hebrew for this word is translated “slave drivers” in Ex 5:6. (CSB)

lamb led to the slaughter. Cf. Ps 44:22; Rev 5:6. John the Baptist called Jesus “the Lamb of God” (Jn 1:29, 35). (CSB)

This section begins with procession (53:7), continues with execution (53:8), and ends with the Servant's burial (53:9). Yahweh in his role as Shepherd (40:11), leads the rejected Lamb to the slaughter (cf. 53:6, 10). The Servant is not only socially marginalized (53:2), he is a slaughtered Lamb and shorn Sheep.(CC)

The sheep that is to be shorn and slaughtered is silent. So Christ, keeping silence, always sympathizes with their ills. Thus you have Christ undergoing most shameful suffering in His person and yet suffering with a most patient heart. Having completed the first aspect, the prophet begins the second one, regarding the resurrection. (Luther)

When Isaiah compared the Servant to a lamb led to the slaughter, he chose a picture that every Jewish citizen could understand. First, in ancient Israel, people counted wealth in livestock. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all prosperous herdsmen. Second, the sacrificial system God designed for His people at Mt Sinai underscored the death of livestock. The Jews celebrated the Passover with the slaughter of a spotless one-year-old lamb (Exodus 12:1-13). Consider how many Jewish families understood the meaning of a lamb silent before the slaughter. At the

Passover, those bringing their lambs filled the temple. Third, many Jews outside of Jerusalem in the rural areas raised livestock. They sheared their flocks for the wool and slaughtered them for their meat. These humble men and women also knew first-hand the meaning of what Isaiah wrote. (PBC)

opened not his mouth. Jesus remained silent before the chief priests and Pilate (Mt 27:12–14; Mk 14:60–61; 15:4–5; Jn 19:8–9) and before Herod (Lk 23:8–9). (CSB)

He could not fully identify Himself, lest they should save Him from death. He was also silent concerning our sins, which caused His death. (TLSB)

Two times Is. 53:7 notes that, in the face of a death squad, the Servant “did not open his mouth.” This is unusual action. Normally in the OT, sufferers protest, sometimes vehemently, to Yahweh and against their persecutors (e.g., Jeremiah, Job, and many psalms, although in some psalms [e.g., Ps. 38:14-15; 39:9] suffering is endured in silence. Therefore, the Servant’s reserve is odd. Even though his day in court results in being wrongly accused, wrongly sentenced, and wrongly executed, he issues no protests, makes no defense. “When he was reviled, he did not revile back” (1 Peter 2:23; cf. Mt. 27:12-14; Mk. 15:5; Lk. 23:9; Jn. 19:9). Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12). (CC)

led to slaughter – John the Baptist called Him the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36). Just: “As the blood of the Passover saved those who were in Egypt, so also the blood of Christ will deliver from death those who have believed.” (TLSB)

53:8 *By oppression and judgment.* Jesus was given an unfair trial. (CSB)

Yahweh, who is directing these events, is the God of “justice” (30:18). It is ironic, then, that the legal system does not protect his Servant. When Jesus is tried before Pilate, the perversion of justice is featured in all four Gospels. Bogus charges are contrived by false witnesses (Mt. 26:59-61; Mk. 14:56-58; cf. Luke 23:2). And although Pilate repeatedly declares that Jesus is innocent (Mt. 27:24; LK. 23:4, 14, 20, 22; Jn. 18:38), he ends up condemning him to the cross (e.g., Mk. 15:15). (CC)

Now he begins to treat His glorification. Behold, here he declares that He whom he had until now depicted as a sheep to be killed and whom he had described as destined for a most shameful death for the sins of others is to be raised again. Now he describes Him again. He is not dead but taken away from oppression. Here he says that His *oppression and judgment* is finished. This cannot be said of a dead person remaining in the grave, but it can be said of one liberated and revived. The text says that He was oppressed and in judgment but has now been removed from them, hence resurrected. (Luther)

his generation. To die without children was considered a tragedy (2Sa 18:18). Cf. also v. 10. (CSB)

Who can relate its duration, since His life and duration is eternal? Note the two contrary statements: Someone dying and yet enduring forever. *Generation* properly means age, era, a lifetime. it is a proverbial statement that “a generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever” (Eccl. 1:4). This must be understood as referring not to generation but to age. Here, then, the prophet established Christ in an eternal age, something that cannot be expressed, namely, that He has been transposed into eternal life. Peter expounds this passage in Acts, where

he says (Acts 2:24): “God raised Him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it,” and led Him into generation, that is, into length of life and eternity. Christ has such length of life that it cannot be expressed. Unless we believe it by faith, eternity is beyond expression. (Luther)

Shockingly, no one from His own generation understood what was going on. The incarnation of Christ was and remains a mystery. Hilary of Poitiers: “Penetrate into the mystery, plunge into the darkness which shrouds that birth, where you will be alone with God the Unbegotten and God the Only-begotten. Make your start, continue, persevere I know that you will not reach the goal, but I shall rejoice at your progress. For He who devoutly treads an endless road, though he reach no conclusion, will profit by his exertions. Reason will fail for want of words, but when it comes to a stand it will be the better for the effort made” (NPNF 2 9:55). (TLSB)

for the transgressions of my people – The word means rebellion. Every sin is an act of rebellion against God, not a simple mistake against the expectations of human etiquette or accepted human behavior. (PBC)

53:9 *the wicked*. The manner of his death would indicate that, as far as those who condemned him were concerned, he was to be buried with executed criminals. (CSB)

He died with the wicked, though only a thief recognized His royalty at His death (Lk 23:32, 40–43). (TLSB)

The authorities judged this servant to be wicked and guilty of death. Capital punishment would be carried out, and it was. Ordinarily such a “criminal” would be buried with other criminals. Yet even though the authorities would assign the Servant a grave with other criminals, God had other plans. The Servant was innocent. After His death, He did not receive a common and dishonorable burial reserved for criminals and enemies of the state. God overruled the customary practice. (PBC)

the rich.† According to the Gospels (Mt 27:57–60 and parallels), the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea gave Jesus an honorable burial by placing his body in his own tomb. (CSB)

He was buried in a rich man’s tomb (Jn 19:38–42). (TLSB)

How could someone so rejected and despised be buried among the rich? The subversive Gospel continues in this verse. Roman custom allowed birds and animals to devour the bodies who had been crucified. To be left exposed and unburied was an ultimate disgrace (Jer. 16:4; 25:33), but after Christ’s atoning work was finished (jn.19:30), God would not tolerate such corruption of his Son’s flesh (Ps. 16:9-10). The Scriptures (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:4) and the Creeds affirm that Jesus was buried. (CC)

Christ’s burial under the care of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (Jn. 19:38-41) was that of an honorable rich person. The Savior’s exaltation began at his entombment only to continue with his victorious descent into hell. The church longs for his second coming (see Rev. 22:20), the Father’s last and most glorious act of honoring of his Son. (CC)

no deceit in his mouth. Peter quotes these lines as he encourages believers to endure unjust suffering (1Pe 2:22). (CSB)

He told no lies, but confessed plainly who He was before His accusers (Mk 14:62). (TLSB)

The most innocent Christ was judged by the Jews to be the most guilty, He who was most innocent and guiltless in His teaching and His life. They had not a word to say to Him. Although He was innocent, yet the Lord willed it that He should take upon Himself to be the most criminal of men. Therefore he compares Him with all other men, and they, even though most holy, are guilty. This one Christ alone is the exception; He alone is righteous and holy. For that reason death could not hold Him. (Luther)

53:10 *the will of the Lord* – The first thought we encounter in this verse includes Jehovah’s name, “the Lord.” The God of grace, who appeared to Moses and revealed His name of love and compassion (Exodus 34:6, 7), willed all that His Servant endured. (PBC)

Jesus’ suffering and death were part of God’s plan before the creation of the world (cf Ac 2:23; Eph 1:3–10; 1Pt 1:20; Rv 13:8b). (TLSB)

The Servant’s suffering and death was not accidental. It was, simultaneously, both an act of people and act of God. This does not absolve from responsibility those who put him to death, but they were not in control of situation. They were doing only what the Lord permitted them to do. Yahweh formulated his plan even before the creation of the world. (CC)

crush him. What we have read in the precious verses of this chapter was the plan of the Lord from eternity. He did unfold the plan as He went along, but He willed it always. He is the God of firm, steadfast, unflinching love for His creatures. His love moved Him to carry out this plan in the arena of time and history. (PBC)

offering of guilt. An offering where restitution was usually required (Lev 5:16; 6:5) and the offender sacrificed a ram (Lev 5:15). (CSB)

One word in Hebrew, translated “guilt offering” in Lev. 5:15-16. Its purpose in the ritual was to make restitution for the wrong done, thus to satisfy the demand for holiness. Ap. XXIV 23: “Isaiah interprets the Law, so that we may know Christ’s death is truly a satisfaction for our sins, or remedy, and that the ceremonies of the Law are not, He says ‘When His soul makes an offering for sin, He shall see His offspring,’ and so on (Isaiah 53:10). The word used here means a victim for transgression (asham). In the Law this illustrated that a certain Victim was to come to make satisfaction for our sins and reconcile God. This was so that people might know that God wishes to be reconciled to us, not because of our own righteousness, but because of another’s merits: Christ.” (Ap. XXIV 23) (TLSB)

A “guilt offering” properly offers something of value as a recompense, or compensation, for something the worshiper had withheld from God. The offering does not expiate or remove the wrong, but rather it compensates for it. (PBC)

his offspring. Spiritual descendants. (CSB)

His disciples and all believers would be God’s children (John 1:10-13), the new Israel (Gal. 6:15-16). (TLSB)

Not only will the Servant “see offspring,” but he will also “lengthen his days.” Both terms presuppose his resurrection from the dead. When Paul testifies that Christ was raised from the dead “in accordance with Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:4), not only does he have in mind specific texts like Gen. 22:1-14; Ezek. 37:1-14; Hos. 6:2; and Jonah 2, but he also maintains that it is

characteristic of God to raise his people from death to new life, as expressed in, for example, 1 Sam. 2:6 and Psalms 16 and 30. “He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Mt. 22:32). The God who conquered death so many times in the OT (Gen. 5:24; 1 Ki. 17:17-24; 2 Ki. 4:18-37; 13:21) does not leave his Son, Jesus in the realm of the death. For this reason, Jesus “must” be raised again (e.g, Mt. 16:21; Mk. 8:31; Lk. 24:26, 44). (CC)

prolong his days. † Christ would rise from the grave and live forever. (CSB)

prosper. Because the Servant paid the full penalty incurred by the sin of the world, His days did not end in death. By dying and rising again, He became the source of life to spiritual offspring without number (1 Peter 1:3-4, 23; 1 John 5:1). (TLSB)

Here the mystery of the treatment accorded by God to the sinless Servant is set forth. His sufferings, His bruises, were divinely inflicted; He bore the sicknesses of mankind by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. His very soul, His life, was offered as a vicarious sacrifice of trespass, in voluntary surrender, a complete ransom. But now comes the fruit and the glory of the mystery; for the Servant, having died, sees His offspring, His spiritual children, born to Him as the result of the Gospel-message. Having died, He prolongs His days, for now He lives forevermore. Having died and being now once more alive, He carries into effect the divine purpose, His kingdom advancing throughout the world, through the effect of His power. (Kretzmann)

53:11 *he shall see* – Isaiah again takes up the recurring theme of “seeing” and “knowing or understanding.” In contrast to Israel (42:18-19), this Servant sees and knows. The Servant knew and did the will of God so perfectly that, for the sake of His obedience, disobedient humanity is entitled to be accounted righteous (John 17:19, 25). It is also true that by knowing and receiving the Servant, sinners are justified in God’s sight (Luke 1:77; John 17:3; 2 Cor. 4:6). Ap. IV 101: “What is Christ’s knowledge unless it means to know Christ’s benefits, the promises he has scattered throughout the world by the Gospel? To know these benefits is properly and truly to believe for Christ’s sake.” (Ap. IV 10) (TLSB)

be satisfied. In 1:11, where the same Hebrew word appears, God had “more than enough” of innumerable sacrifices that accomplished nothing. Here the one sacrifice of Christ brings perfect satisfaction. (CSB)

The Servant justifies many. In this case, “many” is the opposite of “none”; best understood as “all” in this context. The “many” is a theme of Jesus (cf Mt 26:28; Mk 10:45). In these cases, “many” also refers to all, for “in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself” (2Co 5:19; cf 1Jn 2:2). (TLSB)

his knowledge. † His true knowledge of the true God and perfect obedience to his will (see 1:3; 6:9; 43:10; 45:4–5; 52:6; 56:10). The Spirit of knowledge (11:2) rested on the Messiah (but see the third NIV text note here). Cf. 52:13. (CSB)

the righteous one. Cause many to be declared righteous. See 5:23 (“acquit”); Ro 5:19 and note. (CSB)

The Fourth Song concludes in the setting of God’s courtroom, as did the Third Song (50:8-9). In 50:8 Yahweh justifies and vindicates the Servant; here the vindicated Servant justifies the many. There is now a surplus of righteousness that spills over through the Servant to benefit all the

unrighteousness. In 54:17 Yahweh promises his “servants” this inheritance: “their righteousness is from me.” (CC)

The gift of righteousness through faith is the Servant is the major message in Isaiah 40-55. Jesus is the Righteous One.” At his Baptism, our Savior commands John to baptize him “to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt. 3:15). This signifies his vicarious death (cf. Lk. 12:50), an act that will make many righteous. (CC)

53:12 I. The Lord pledges to honor the Servant’s sacrifice. (TLSB)

shall divide the spoil with the strong. God will reward his servant as if he was a king sharing in the spoils of a great victory (see 52:15). (CSB)

divide the spoils. God’s gift to his suffering servant (cf. 9:3). (CSB)

Part of the prize Yahweh gives to the Servant is “plunder, spoil” to divide and share among “the many.” One aspect of the victory plunder is the Holy Spirit (sevenfold in Is. 11:2) with his diverse gifts (nine “fruit of the Spirit” in Gal. 5:22-23). (CC)

poured out his soul. As a sacrifice (see v. 10). (CSB)

Not the typical term for handling the blood of a sacrifice, though comparable to that term’s use in Ps 22:14. Hbr term here describes laying something “bare” or “empty,” exposing it. (TLSB)

to death. See Php 2:8. (CSB)

and was numbered with the transgressors. Quoted in Lk 22:37 with reference to Jesus. (CSB)

bore. The Hebrew for this verb is translated “took up” in v. 4. (CSB)

soul. Hbr *nephesh*, also translated “life.” During sacrifice, the victim’s blood/life was laid bare, or emptied out, in the act of atonement. (TLSB)

makes intercession. † See Lk 23:34; Heb 7:25. (CSB)

Hanging between two thieves and praying for those who crucified Him, Jesus was at the same time making atonement for all people. (TLSB)

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52:13–53:12 In this final Servant Song, the Lord sacrifices the innocent Servant for the sake of ignorant, rebellious transgressors, making atonement for them. Commit this passage to heart. Few places in Scripture describe God’s surpassing mercy for you in so touching a manner. • “What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this That caused the Lord of bliss To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!” Amen. (LSB 543:1) (TLSB)