From Captivity to the Cross: Isaiah 52–53

Section One: Awake, O Zion (52:1–6)

Amplified Bible

1 Awake, awake,
Put on your strength, O Zion;
Put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
Will no longer come into you.
2 Shake yourself from the dust, arise,
O captive Jerusalem;
Rid yourself of the chains around your neck,
O captive Daughter of Zion.
3 For the Lord says this, "You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed, but not with money."
4 For the Lord God says this, "My people went down at the first into Egypt to live there; and [many years later Sennacherib] the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.
5 But now, what do I have here," declares the Lord, "seeing that My people have been taken away without reason? Those who rule over them howl [with taunting and mockery of salvation]," declares the Lord, "and My name is continually blasphemed all day long.
6 Therefore My people shall know My Name and what it means. Therefore in that day I am the One who is speaking, 'Here I am.'"

Translation Comparison

Phrase	KJV	ESV	NIV	NASB	NLT	AMP
v.2	"arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem"	"arise; be seated"	"rise up, sit enthroned"	"rise up, Captive Jerusalem"	"Sit in a place of honor"	"arise, O captive Jerusalem"
v.3	"Ye have sold yourselves for nought"	"You were sold for nothing"	same as ESV	same as ESV	"When I sold you into exile, I received no payment"	"You were sold for nothing ... redeemed, but not with money"

v.4	"the Assyrian"	"the Assyrian"	"lately, Assyria"	"the Assyrian"	"Now they are oppressed by Assyria"	"[many years later Sennacherib] the Assyrian"
v.5	"make them to howl"	"Their rulers wail"	"those who rule them mock"	"Those who rule over them howl"	"shout in exultation"	"howl [with taunting and mockery of salvation]"
v.6	"I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I"	"it is I who speak; here I am"	"it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I"	"I am the one who is speaking, 'Here I am'"	"I am the one who speaks to them"	"I am the One who is speaking, 'Here I am'"

Word Notes

- **"Awake, awake"** repeats the double call of 51:9 ("Awake, awake ... O arm of the LORD") and 51:17 ("Rouse yourself, rouse yourself ... O Jerusalem"). In 51:9 the people call God to wake up. In 52:1 God turns it around and calls His people to wake up.
- **"Put on your strength ... your beautiful garments"** is the language of changing clothes, from mourning clothes to festival or wedding clothes. Compare Isaiah 61:3 and 61:10.
- **"Sit" or "be seated"**: the Hebrew can mean "sit enthroned." Jerusalem moves from sitting in the dust as a captive (47:1 describes Babylon's coming fall in the same image) to sitting in honor. The AMP and NASB read the verse as "arise, captive Jerusalem," while the KJV, ESV, NIV, and NLT include the idea of sitting.
- **"Redeemed" (ga'al)** is the word for the kinsman-redeemer, the family member who buys back a relative's land or freedom (Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 4). God is acting as Israel's next of kin.
- **"Sold for nothing ... redeemed, but not with money"**: God received nothing when He handed His people over to their enemies, so He owes no one a price to take them back. But the question remains: if not with money, then with what? Isaiah 53 answers it. Peter makes the connection directly: "you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold ... but with precious blood, like that of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18–19).
- **Egypt, Assyria, and now Babylon** (implied in v.5): three oppressors across Israel's history. The AMP's bracket names Sennacherib, the Assyrian king who invaded Judah in Isaiah's own lifetime (Isaiah 36–37).

- **"Howl" or "mock"**: the traditional Hebrew text reads "wail" or "howl." The Dead Sea Scrolls read "mock," which the NIV and NLT follow. The AMP keeps "howl" and adds a bracket to explain it as taunting.
- **"My name is continually blasphemed"**: when God's people are captive, outsiders conclude that their God is weak. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 2:24, from the Greek version, to say that God's name is dishonored among the nations because of His people's sin.
- **"Here I am" (hinneni)** is usually what a servant says to a master (Genesis 22:1; 1 Samuel 3:4; Isaiah 6:8). Here God says it to His people. He is present and ready to act.

Discussion Questions

1. Verse 1 calls Zion to "awake." What signs suggest God's people were spiritually asleep? What does spiritual sleepiness look like today?
2. List the actions God commands in verses 1–2: awake, put on, shake off, arise, rid yourself. What does each one picture? Which of these has God already made possible, and which does Zion have to do?
3. Jerusalem is told to change from captive's clothes into beautiful garments. Read Isaiah 61:10 and Colossians 3:12. What "clothes" does God want His people to wear?
4. Verse 3 says, "You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed, but not with money." If not with money, then with what? Read 1 Peter 1:18–19 together. (Leader: this question sets up the whole study. Write it on the board and come back to it in the last session.)
5. In verse 5, God's name is blasphemed because His people are in captivity. How can the condition of God's people affect how others see God, for better or worse? (Compare Romans 2:24 and Matthew 5:16.)
6. In verse 6, God says, "Here I am," the words a servant normally says to a master. What does that tell you about God's attitude toward His people in their lowest moment?

Amplified Bible

7 How beautiful and delightful on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace,
Who brings good news of good [things],
Who announces salvation,
Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"
8 Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices,

Together they shout for joy;
For they will see face to face
The return of the Lord to Zion.
9 Break forth, shout joyfully together,
You ruins of Jerusalem;
For the Lord has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
10 The Lord has bared His holy arm (His infinite power)
Before the eyes of all the nations [revealing Himself as the One by Whom Israel is redeemed from captivity],
That all the ends of the earth may see
The salvation of our God.

Translation Comparison

Phrase	KJV	ESV	NIV	NASB	NLT	AMP
v.7 messenger	"him that bringeth good tidings"	"him who brings good news"	"those who bring good news"	"one who brings good news"	"the messenger who brings good news"	"him who brings good news"
v.7	"good tidings of good"	"good news of happiness"	"good tidings"	"good news of happiness" (note: lit. "good")	"the good news of peace and salvation"	"good news of good [things]"
v.8	"they shall see eye to eye"	"eye to eye they see"	"they will see it with their own eyes"	"see with their own eyes" (note: lit. "eye to eye")	"before their very eyes"	"they will see face to face"
v.8	"when the Lord shall bring again Zion"	"the return of the Lord to Zion"	"When the Lord returns to Zion"	"When the Lord restores Zion"	"the Lord returning to Jerusalem"	"The return of the Lord to Zion"
v.10	"made bare his holy arm"	"bared his holy arm"	"will lay bare his holy arm"	"bared His holy arm"	"demonstrated his holy power"	"bared His holy arm (His infinite power)"

v.10 end	"salvation of our God"	same	same	same	"the victory of our God"	"The salvation of our God"

Word Notes

- **"Brings good news" (basar)**: the Greek translation of the Old Testament renders this word with euangelizo, the root of the New Testament word "gospel" (euangelion). Isaiah 52:7 is one of the places where the idea of "the gospel" comes from.
- **The messenger on the mountains**: in the ancient world, a runner came over the hills to bring word from a battle. The city watched his pace and posture to tell whether the news was good. These feet are "beautiful" because of the news they carry. Nahum 1:15 uses the same picture.
- **Four pieces of news**: peace (shalom), good (tov), salvation (yeshu'ah), and "Your God reigns" (malak). The last is the summary of the other three. God is King again over His people.
- **"Your God reigns"** is the Old Testament root of Jesus' first message: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14–15).
- **Romans 10:15** quotes verse 7 to make the point that people cannot believe a message they have never heard, and they cannot hear it unless someone is sent.
- **Watchmen (tsophim)** stood on the city walls watching for messengers or enemies. Here they are the first to see the messenger, and then the LORD Himself.
- **"Eye to eye"** literally pictures seeing something up close and clearly. The AMP renders it "face to face."
- **"Bared His holy arm"**: a warrior or worker rolled back his sleeve before getting to work or going into battle. God is getting ready to act. This verse leads directly into 53:1: "to whom ... has the arm and infinite power of the Lord been revealed?" Most people expect God's arm to show up as overwhelming force. Isaiah 53 reveals it in a suffering Servant.
- **"All the ends of the earth"**: salvation is not only for Israel. Simeon echoes this verse when he holds the infant Jesus: "my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples" (Luke 2:30–31).

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Isaiah call the messenger's feet beautiful? What makes a messenger beautiful to the people who receive the message?

2. The messenger brings four announcements: peace, good things, salvation, and "Your God reigns." How do these four relate to one another? Why might "Your God reigns" be the summary?
3. Romans 10:14–15 quotes verse 7. Who brought the good news to you? How did that person's "feet" become beautiful in your life?
4. In verse 9, the "ruins of Jerusalem" are told to sing. Why is it significant that ruins are the ones called to sing? What "ruins" in a life might God call to sing?
5. Verse 10 says God "bared His holy arm" before the nations. How do you picture that? Now read 53:1. How does God's arm show up there, and how is it different from what we expect?
6. "All the ends of the earth" will see God's salvation. How does this verse shape the way you think about missions, or about the people around you who do not yet know Christ?

Amplified Bible

11 Depart, depart, go out from there (the lands of exile),
Touch no unclean thing;
Go out of the midst of her (Babylon), purify yourselves,
You who carry the articles of the Lord [on your journey from there].
12 For you will not go out in a hurry [as when you left Egypt],
Nor will you go in flight [fleeing, as you did from the Egyptians];
For the Lord will go before you,
And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Translation Comparison

Phrase	KJV	ESV	NIV	NASB	NLT	AMP
v.11	"that bear the vessels of the Lord"	"you who bear the vessels of the Lord"	"you who carry the articles of the Lord's house"	"You who carry the vessels of the Lord"	"you who carry home the sacred objects of the Lord"	"You who carry the articles of the Lord [on your journey from there]"
v.12	"not go out with haste, nor go by flight"	"not go out in haste ... not go in flight"	"not leave in haste or go in flight"	"not go out in a hurry, Nor ... as fugitives"	"not leave in a hurry, running for your lives"	"not go out in a hurry [as when you left Egypt]"

v.12 end	"rereward" (old spelling of "rearward")	"your rear guard"	"your rear guard"	"your rear guard"	"will protect you from behind"	"your rear guard"

Note: the 1611 KJV and many later printings use "rereward," an old English spelling of "rearward." Some online and modern editions display it as "reward." Either way, the Hebrew means rear guard.

Word Notes

- **"Depart, depart"**: the third double command in this passage, after "Awake, awake" (51:9; 52:1) and "Rouse yourself, rouse yourself" (51:17). The repetition gives the passage urgency.
- **"The articles" or "vessels" of the LORD** are the temple utensils that Nebuchadnezzar carried to Babylon (2 Kings 25:14–15; Daniel 5:2–3). Ezra 1:7–11 records Cyrus returning them to the Jews for the trip home. The people carrying holy things must be holy themselves, like priests.
- **"Touch no unclean thing"**: Paul quotes this verse in 2 Corinthians 6:17 when he calls Christians to separate themselves from idolatry.
- **"Not in a hurry" (chippazon)**: this is the same word used for the first Passover, which Israel ate "in haste" (Exodus 12:11; Deuteronomy 16:3). The first exodus was a rushed escape. This new exodus will be calm and confident.
- **"The LORD will go before you ... your rear guard"** recalls the pillar of cloud and fire in the first exodus, which went before Israel and then moved behind them to protect them from Pharaoh's army (Exodus 13:21; 14:19). God surrounds His people on both sides.

Discussion Questions

1. What are God's people being called out of in verse 11? What would it mean for a Christian today to "go out from there" and "touch no unclean thing"? (Compare 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1.)
2. The people carrying the vessels of the LORD must purify themselves. What has God entrusted to you to carry? What does that responsibility require?
3. The first exodus was "in haste," and this one will not be. Why does it matter that God's people can leave calmly instead of running?
4. Verse 12 says the LORD goes before you and is also your rear guard. Which do you need more right now: God going ahead of you into the unknown, or God guarding you from what is behind you? Why?

5. This section ends Part One. Look back at all of 52:1–12. How would you summarize what God promises His people? What has not been explained yet?

Bridge: How Isaiah 52:1–12 Leads into the Servant Song

Isaiah 52:13 can feel like an abrupt change, from a joyful march home to a disfigured Servant. But the two halves of the chapter are closely connected. Use this table to show the group how 52:1–12 raises questions that 52:13–53:12 answers.

Isaiah 52:1–12 raises it	Isaiah 52:13–53:12 answers it
"You will be redeemed, but not with money" (52:3)	Redeemed by the Servant, who became "a guilt offering" (53:10)
"The Lord has bared His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations" (52:10)	"To whom ... has the arm and infinite power of the Lord been revealed?" (53:1): it is revealed in the Servant
"Many were astonished" when Jerusalem was humiliated (52:14 looks back to "you, My people")	The Servant's humiliation goes beyond theirs: "His appearance was marred more than any man" (52:14)
"My people have been taken away without reason" (52:5)	The Servant "was taken away" "for the transgression of my people" (53:8)
"Purify yourselves" (52:11)	"He will sprinkle many nations" (52:15), the priestly act that cleanses
"All the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God" (52:10)	"Kings will shut their mouths ... what they had not been told they will see" (52:15)
The messenger announces peace (shalom) (52:7)	"The punishment [required] for our well-being [shalom] fell on Him" (53:5)
"Your God reigns!" (52:7)	The Servant is "raised and lifted up and greatly exalted" (52:13)

Bridge Discussion Questions

1. Read 52:7–12 and then 52:13–15 aloud, without stopping between them. How does the mood change? Why might Isaiah place a suffering Servant right after a joyful announcement?
2. Look at the first row of the table. How does Isaiah 53 answer the question from 52:3: "If not with money, then with what?"
3. In 52:10, God's arm is revealed to the nations. In 53:1, the question is, "To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Why do you think so few recognize God's power when it comes in the form of the Servant?

4. The good news of 52:7 is peace. In 53:5, peace comes at the cost of the Servant's punishment. How does that change the way you hear the "good news"?

A note on the Amplified Bible: the AMP uses brackets [ ] for added clarifying words and italics for words that expand meaning or are implied by the Hebrew. Those additions are interpretive helps rather than words found directly in the Hebrew. That is part of why comparing translations first is useful. It shows which words come straight from the original and which the AMP adds to bring out the meaning.

The Shape of the Song

Many scholars see a mirror-image (chiastic) structure in the five stanzas:

Stanza	Verses	Theme	Who is speaking
A	52:13–15	The Servant exalted; nations and kings astonished	The LORD
B	53:1–3	The Servant rejected; "we" did not esteem Him	"We" (the confessing people)
C	53:4–6	The center: He bore what was ours	"We"
B'	53:7–9	The Servant silent, condemned, buried	The prophet / "we"
A'	53:10–12	The Servant vindicated, rewarded, interceding	The LORD

The song opens and closes with God speaking about exaltation. Between those frames is a confession from people who misjudged the Servant. The center, verses 4–6, is the heart of the passage: substitution.

Opening questions:

- Why do you think the song begins with the end of the story, the Servant's exaltation, before telling of His suffering?
- Notice the shift from "He" and "Him" to "we," "our," and "us." Read 53:4–6 and count the first-person plural pronouns. What does that do to the reader?

Stanza One: The Servant Exalted (52:13–15)

Amplified Bible

13 Indeed, My Servant (the Messiah) will act wisely and prosper;
He will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted.
14 Just as many were astonished and appalled at you, My people,
So His appearance was marred more than any man
And His form [marred] more than the sons of men.
15 So He will sprinkle many nations [with His blood, providing salvation],
Kings will shut their mouths because of Him;
For what they had not been told they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.

Translation Comparison

Phrase	KJV	ESV / NIV	NASB	NLT	AMP
v.13 action	"deal prudently"	"act wisely"	"prosper"	"prosper"	"act wisely and prosper"
v.14 object	"at thee"	ESV "at you"; NIV "at him"	"at you, My people"	"when they saw him"	"at you, My people"
v.15 verb	"sprinkle"	"sprinkle" (ESV note: "or startle")	"sprinkle" (note: LXX "wonder at Him")	"startle"	"sprinkle ... [with His blood]"

Word Notes

- "Act wisely" (Hebrew sakal) carries both ideas: acting with insight and succeeding as a result. The AMP keeps both meanings ("act wisely and prosper"). Other translations pick one.
- "Raised and lifted up" (rum and nasa) is the same pair of words used for the LORD Himself in Isaiah 6:1 ("high and lifted up") and 57:15. Isaiah uses throne-room language for the Servant.
- "Sprinkle" (nazah) is the priestly word for sprinkling blood or water in cleansing rites (Leviticus 4:6, 16:14). The Greek Septuagint reads "many nations will marvel," which is why the NLT has "startle." The AMP keeps "sprinkle" and adds the bracketed explanation "with His blood."
- The AMP's parenthetical "(the Messiah)" is an interpretive identification. It is not in the Hebrew.

Discussion Questions

1. Verse 13 promises exaltation, and verse 14 describes a disfigured appearance. How can both be true of the same Person?

2. The AMP adds "My people" in verse 14, so the text compares Israel's suffering with the Servant's. What does that comparison suggest about the relationship between the Servant and the people?
3. "Sprinkle" or "startle": which rendering do you find more convincing, and why does the choice matter? If "sprinkle" is right, what role is the Servant playing?
4. Kings "shut their mouths." When have you been left speechless by something you did not expect? What is it about the Servant that silences the powerful?
5. Paul quotes verse 15 in Romans 15:21 to explain his mission to people who had never heard of Christ. How does that shape the way you read "what they had not been told they will see"?

Stanza Two: The Servant Rejected (53:1–3)

Amplified Bible

1 Who has believed [confidently trusted in, relied on, and adhered to] our message [of salvation]?
And to whom [if not us] has the arm and infinite power of the Lord been revealed?
2 For He [the Servant of God] grew up before Him like a tender shoot (plant),
And like a root out of dry ground;
He has no stately form or majestic splendor
That we would look at Him,
Nor [handsome] appearance that we would be attracted to Him.
3 He was despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and pain and acquainted with grief;
And like One from whom men hide their faces
He was despised, and we did not appreciate His worth or esteem Him.

Translation Comparison

Phrase	KJV	ESV	NIV	NASB	AMP

v.1	"our report"	"what he has heard from us"	"our message"	"our report"	"our message [of salvation]"
v.3	"man of sorrows ... acquainted with grief"	same	"a man of suffering, and familiar with pain"	"a man of great pain and familiar with sickness"	"A Man of sorrows and pain and acquainted with grief"
v.3 end	"we esteemed him not"	same	"we held him in low esteem"	"we had no regard for Him"	"we did not appreciate His worth or esteem Him"

Word Notes

- "Believed" (aman) is the root of "amen." It means to lean on, rely on, or treat as firm. The AMP's bracket, "confidently trusted in, relied on, and adhered to," unpacks this well.
- "The arm of the LORD" is a common Old Testament image for God's saving power in action, as in the Exodus (Deuteronomy 4:34; Isaiah 52:10). Here that power is revealed in a Person no one would have picked out.
- "Tender shoot" (yoneq) literally means "suckling," a small sprout. It echoes Isaiah 11:1: "a shoot from the stump of Jesse."
- "Sorrows" and "grief" (makob and choli) can also mean "pains" and "sickness." The ESV and NASB footnote this. The KJV tradition leans emotional, and the NASB leans physical. The AMP combines both: "sorrows and pain."

Discussion Questions

1. Verse 1 opens with a question of unbelief. John 12:37–38 and Romans 10:16 both quote it to explain why many rejected Jesus. Why do you think the gospel message is so often hard to believe?
2. A root "out of dry ground" grows where no one expects growth. What "dry ground" did the Servant come from? Think about Bethlehem, Nazareth, and a carpenter's family.
3. Verse 2 says nothing about His appearance drew people in. Why would God send His Servant without outward attractiveness? What does that say about how we judge worth?
4. The AMP ends verse 3 with "we did not appreciate His worth." Is rejection always hostile, or can it look like indifference? Which describes our culture better? Which describes you?

5. "A Man of sorrows ... acquainted with grief." How does knowing the Servant is personally familiar with pain affect the way you bring your own grief to God? (Compare Hebrews 4:15.)

Stanza Three: The Servant Substituted (53:4–6)

This is the center of the song.

Amplified Bible

4 But [in fact] He has borne our griefs,
And He has carried our sorrows and pains;
Yet we [ignorantly] assumed that He was stricken,
Struck down by God and degraded and humiliated [by Him].
5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing];
The punishment [required] for our well-being fell on Him,
And by His stripes (wounds) we are healed.
6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
We have turned, each one, to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the wickedness of us all [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing]
To fall on Him [instead of us].

Translation Comparison

Phrase	KJV	ESV / NIV	NASB	NLT	AMP
v.4	"borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows"	ESV same; NIV "took up our pain and bore our suffering"	"our sicknesses ... our pains"	"our weaknesses ... our sorrows"	"our griefs ... our sorrows and pains"
v.5a	"wounded"	"pierced"	"pierced" (note: "or wounded")	"pierced for our rebellion"	"wounded"
v.5c	"the chastisement of our peace"	ESV "the chastisement that brought us peace"; NIV "the punishment that brought us peace"	"the punishment for our well-being"	"He was beaten so we could be whole"	"The punishment [required] for our well-being"

v.6	"laid on him"	"laid on him"	"caused ... to fall on Him"	"laid on him"	"caused ... to fall on Him [instead of us]"

Word Notes

- "Borne" and "carried" (nasa and sabal) are words for carrying a load. Nasa is also the word used for the scapegoat that "bears" Israel's iniquities into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:22). Matthew 8:17 applies verse 4 to Jesus' healing ministry, and 1 Peter 2:24 applies verse 5 to the cross. Both apply the passage.
- "Wounded / pierced" (chalal) means pierced through, the way a sword or spear does. "Crushed" (daka) means ground to powder.
- "Punishment / chastisement" (musar) means discipline or correction. "Well-being / peace" (shalom) means wholeness, complete welfare, and restored relationship, not only the absence of conflict.
- "Stripes" (chaburah) refers to the welt or bruise left by a blow. It is singular in Hebrew, as though His whole body were one wound.
- "Caused to fall" (paga) means to strike, meet, or land on. The same verb shows up again in verse 12 as "interceded." The iniquity "met" Him, and He "meets" God on behalf of transgressors. The NASB and AMP bring out the first sense.
- "Instead of us": the AMP adds this bracket to make the substitution explicit. The idea is clearly in the passage ("for our transgressions ... for our wickedness"), but the phrase itself is the AMP's explanation.

Discussion Questions

1. Verse 4 contains a great misunderstanding: "we assumed that He was stricken ... by God." Why would onlookers conclude that the Servant's suffering was His own fault? Where do people still assume suffering equals divine punishment? (Compare John 9:1–3 and Job's friends.)
2. List every "our" and "us" in verses 4–6. Then list what the Servant receives in exchange. What is the trade being described?
3. Verse 5 connects punishment with peace (shalom). How can one Person's punishment produce another's wholeness? Is that fair? Is it grace?

4. "By His stripes we are healed." Matthew 8:17 connects this to physical healing, and 1 Peter 2:24–25 connects it to healing from sin. How do you hold those two applications together?
5. Verse 6 begins and ends with "all." Everyone went astray, and all the iniquity fell on Him. Why is it important that the problem and the solution are both universal?
6. Sheep do not usually rebel on purpose. They wander. What does the "sheep" image say about how people drift from God? What is "your own way" most likely to look like?

Stanza Four: The Servant Silent, Condemned, and Buried (53:7–9)

Amplified Bible

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth [to complain or defend Himself];
Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before her shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.
8 After oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation [His contemporaries], who [among them] concerned himself with the fact
That He was cut off from the land of the living [by His death]
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke [of death] was due?
9 His grave was assigned with the wicked,
But He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

Translation Comparison

Phrase	KJV	ESV	NIV	NASB	AMP
v.8a	"taken from prison and from judgment"	"By oppression and judgment he was taken away"	same as ESV (note: "Or From arrest")	same as ESV	"After oppression and judgment He was taken away"
v.8b	"who shall declare his generation?"	"as for his generation, who considered"	"who of his generation protested?"	"who considered"	"who [among them] concerned himself"

v.8d	"was he stricken"	"stricken for the transgression of my people"	"he was punished"	"to whom the blow was due"	"to whom the stroke [of death] was due"
v.9	"he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich"	"they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man"	"assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich"	"assigned with wicked men, Yet ... with a rich man"	"assigned with the wicked, But He was with a rich man"

Word Notes

- Verse 8 is one of the hardest verses in the chapter to translate, which is why the translations differ so much. The KJV's "who shall declare his generation?" is often read as asking about His descendants or His origin. Modern versions read it as "who among His contemporaries cared?" The AMP follows the modern reading and footnotes "who will explain to His generation" as an alternative.
- "Cut off" (gazar) is a strong word for being severed, cut down like a tree. Together with "land of the living" and "grave," it clearly points to death.
- Verse 9 contrasts two ideas: a grave "assigned" with criminals, yet a burial "with a rich man." The Gospels record Jesus crucified between two criminals and buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, "a rich man" (Matthew 27:38, 57–60).
- In Acts 8:32–35, an Ethiopian official reads verses 7–8 and asks Philip, "About whom does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Philip "beginning with this Scripture ... preached Jesus to him."

Discussion Questions

1. The AMP adds that He did not open His mouth "to complain or defend Himself." Read Matthew 26:62–63 and 27:12–14. Why would an innocent Person refuse to defend Himself? Is silence weakness or strength here?
2. A lamb "led to the slaughter" brings to mind Passover (Exodus 12) and the daily sacrifices. John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). How does Isaiah 53 help explain John's words?
3. Verse 8 asks, "who among them concerned himself?" Those around Him saw the injustice and did nothing. Where is it easiest for us to be bystanders?

4. Compare the KJV's "who shall declare his generation?" with the AMP's reading. Does either change how you understand the verse? What do you gain by seeing both?
5. Verse 9 insists on the Servant's innocence: "no violence ... no deceit." 1 Peter 2:22 quotes it directly. Why is His innocence essential to everything else in the passage? What would change if He had deserved it?
6. Put yourself in the Ethiopian's place in Acts 8. If someone asked you "Who is this about?" while reading Isaiah 53, how would you answer?

Stanza Five: The Servant Vindicated (53:10–12)

Amplified Bible

10 Yet the Lord was willing
To crush Him, causing Him to suffer;
If He would give Himself as a guilt offering [an atonement for sin],
He shall see His [spiritual] offspring,
He shall prolong His days,
And the will (good pleasure) of the Lord shall succeed and prosper in His hand.
11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He shall see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge [of what He has accomplished] the Righteous One,
My Servant, shall justify the many [making them righteous—upright before God, in right standing with Him],
For He shall bear [the responsibility for] their sins.
12 Therefore, I will divide and give Him a portion with the great [kings and rulers],
And He shall divide the spoils with the mighty,
Because He [willingly] poured out His life to death,
And was counted among the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore and took away the sin of many,
And interceded [with the Father] for the transgressors.

Translation Comparison

Phrase	KJV	ESV	NIV	NASB	AMP
v.10a	"it pleased the LORD to bruise him"	"it was the will of the LORD to crush him"	"it was the LORD's will to crush him"	"the LORD desired to crush Him"	"the Lord was willing to crush Him" (note: "Or pleased")
v.10c	"an offering for sin"	"an offering for guilt"	"an offering for sin"	"a guilt offering"	"a guilt offering [an atonement for sin]"
v.11a	"He shall see of the travail of his soul"	"he shall see and be satisfied" (note: DSS "see light")	"he will see the light of life"	"He will see it" (note: DSS and LXX "light")	"He shall see it and be satisfied"
v.12 end	"made intercession"	"makes intercession"	"made intercession"	"interceded"	"interceded [with the Father]"

Word Notes

- "Was willing / pleased" (chaphets) means to delight in or desire. The KJV's "it pleased the LORD" startles readers, but the point is that the Servant's suffering was not an accident or a tragedy outside God's plan. It was God's purposeful will. The AMP softens it to "was willing" and gives "pleased" in a footnote.
- "Guilt offering" (asham) is the specific sacrifice in Leviticus 5–6 that paid for a wrong and made restitution. The Servant is not only a substitute but full repayment for the debt of sin.
- "He shall see His offspring ... prolong His days": this is resurrection language. The One who was "cut off from the land of the living" (v.8) lives on and sees descendants.
- "See light" in v.11: the Great Isaiah Scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls (about 125 B.C.) and the Septuagint read "he shall see light." The traditional Hebrew (Masoretic) text lacks the word. The NIV includes it in the text, the ESV and NASB put it in a footnote, and the AMP follows the Masoretic text.
- "Justify" (tsadaq) means to declare or make righteous. The AMP's bracket, "making them righteous, upright before God, in right standing with Him," is a good summary of Paul's teaching in Romans 3–5.
- "Counted among the transgressors" is quoted by Jesus Himself on the night of His arrest: "this which is written must be fulfilled in Me" (Luke 22:37).
- "Interceded" (paga) is the same verb as "caused to fall" in verse 6. The sin that landed on Him becomes the basis for His pleading for sinners. Compare Luke 23:34 ("Father, forgive them") and Hebrews 7:25.

Discussion Questions

1. "The Lord was willing to crush Him." This is one of the hardest statements in Scripture. How do you reconcile God's love with God's will that His Servant suffer? (Compare Acts 2:23 and Romans 8:32.)
2. What does it mean that the Servant became a "guilt offering," a payment that makes restitution, and not only a sacrifice? What debt was being paid, and to whom?
3. The one "cut off" (v.8) will "prolong His days" and "see His offspring" (v.10). How does the passage anticipate resurrection? Who are the "offspring"?
4. Verse 11 says He "shall see it and be satisfied." What satisfies the Servant? What does it mean to you that you might be part of His satisfaction?
5. Consider the "see light" reading from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Does it add anything to the meaning? Does it concern you or encourage you that ancient manuscripts differ slightly while the message stays the same?
6. The song ends with intercession, the Servant praying for the very transgressors among whom He was counted. How does it change your prayer life to know that Christ intercedes for you now (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25)?

Summary Questions

1. If you had to summarize Isaiah 53 in one sentence, what would it be?
2. Which translation's rendering of a key phrase surprised you most? Did the Amplified Bible's expansions clarify the meaning or add interpretation you would question?
3. Isaiah wrote roughly seven centuries before Jesus. What does the detail of this prophecy say about the reliability of Scripture and the sovereignty of God?
4. The passage moves from "we did not esteem Him" (v.3) to "He shall justify the many" (v.11). Where are you in that movement right now?
5. 1 Peter 2:21–25 uses Isaiah 53 not only as doctrine but as a pattern for Christian living: suffering without retaliation and trusting God to judge justly. What situation in your life calls for that kind of response this week?

Closing Reflection

Read 53:4–6 aloud in the Amplified Bible, and replace "our," "us," and "we" with "my," "me," and "I."

But [in fact] He has borne my griefs,
And He has carried my sorrows and pains ...
He was wounded for my transgressions,
He was crushed for my wickedness ...
But the Lord has caused my wickedness
To fall on Him [instead of me].

Discuss: how does making the passage personal change the way it lands?

Notes: Stanza One (52:13–15)

- **Goal:** Show that humiliation and exaltation belong to the same Servant.
- **Priority questions:** 1, 3, and 5.
- **Question 1:** Philippians 2:5–11 is the best New Testament parallel. Christ humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross; "for this reason also, God highly exalted Him."
- **Question 3:** If "sprinkle" is correct, the Servant is acting as a priest who cleanses the nations. If "startle" is correct, the emphasis is on the nations' shock. Either way, the nations are affected by Him. You can mention that both meanings fit the context.
- **Connection to Part One:** 52:14's "you, My people" points back to the humiliated Jerusalem of 52:1–5.
- **Watch for:** spending too long on the translation debate in question 3. Five minutes is plenty.

Notes: Stanza Two (53:1–3)

- **Goal:** Help the group see how and why the Servant was rejected, and to recognize themselves in the "we."
- **Priority questions:** 1, 3, and 4.
- **Question 1:** Connect 53:1 back to 52:10 ("bared His holy arm"). The good news is hard to believe because God's power comes in an unexpected form, through weakness rather than spectacle (1 Corinthians 1:22–25).
- **Question 3:** God did not give the Servant outward attractiveness, so that people would not be drawn to Him for the wrong reasons. Compare 1 Samuel 16:7: "the Lord looks at the heart."

- **Question 4:** Rejection can be loud (the crowd shouting "Crucify Him") or quiet (simply not caring). The AMP's "we did not appreciate His worth" describes the quiet kind. Most people today reject Jesus through indifference rather than hostility.
- **Watch for:** question 5 may bring up personal grief. Be ready to pause and pray.

Notes: Stanza Three (53:4–6)

- **Goal:** This is the center of the song and the heart of the study. Make sure the group has plenty of time here.
- **Session 3 icebreaker:** Have you ever had someone take the blame, or pay a debt, for you? How did it feel?
- **Priority questions:** 2, 3, and 5. If you can ask only one question in the whole study, ask question 2.
- **Question 2:** Have the group call out each "our" and "us." Write two columns: "What was ours" (griefs, sorrows, transgressions, wickedness, going astray) and "What He received" (bearing, carrying, wounds, crushing, punishment). The trade is our sin for His suffering, and His suffering for our peace and healing. This is the answer to 52:3: "redeemed, but not with money." Add it to the "Then and Now" chart.
- **Question 3:** It is grace, not fairness. Paul says it clearly: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- **Question 4:** Matthew applies the verse to Jesus' healing ministry as a foretaste. Peter applies it to the cross as the root cure for sin. Both are valid. Some in your group may have strong views on physical healing. Acknowledge that Christians differ on how and when physical healing is promised, and keep the focus on the text.
- **Watch for:** this stanza can feel familiar to longtime believers. Ask them to read it slowly, as if for the first time.

Notes: Stanza Four (53:7–9)

- **Goal:** Show the Servant's silence, innocence, and willing submission.
- **Priority questions:** 1, 2, and 5.
- **Question 1:** His silence is strength. He was not powerless (Matthew 26:53: "twelve legions of angels"). He chose not to defend Himself because He had come to die for others.

- **Question 2:** Connect the Passover lamb (Exodus 12), the "haste" of the first exodus (52:12 in Part One), and John 1:29. The new exodus that Part One announced is accomplished by the new Passover Lamb. Add it to the "Then and Now" chart.
- **Question 5:** If He had deserved the punishment, His death would have paid only for His own sin. An innocent substitute is the only kind who can pay for others (Hebrews 7:26–27; 1 Peter 3:18).
- **Question 6:** This is a good closing question for Session 3. Encourage members to practice a short answer they could actually give a friend.

Notes: Stanza Five (53:10–12)

- **Goal:** Close the story with vindication: resurrection, reward, and intercession.
- **Session 4 icebreaker:** What is one thing you have worked hard for that turned out to be worth it?
- **Priority questions:** 1, 3, and 6.
- **Question 1:** This is the hardest question in the study. Let the group struggle with it. Main points: the cross was not God punishing an unwilling victim. The Father and the Son acted together in love (John 10:17–18; Romans 5:8; 8:32). The suffering served a purpose: "the will of the Lord shall succeed and prosper in His hand." Avoid quick, tidy answers.
- **Question 2:** The guilt offering in Leviticus 5–6 required full repayment plus one-fifth. Sin is a debt to God, and the Servant pays it in full (Colossians 2:13–14).
- **Question 3:** The "offspring" are spiritual descendants, those made righteous through Him (Hebrews 2:10–13). "Prolong His days" after being "cut off" points to resurrection.
- **Question 5:** Some members may be unsettled to learn that manuscripts differ. Reassure them that the differences are small and well known, and that the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah, more than a thousand years older than the previously known manuscripts, matches the traditional text very closely.
- **Watch for:** do not rush question 6. It is one of the most encouraging truths in the passage.

Notes: Bringing It Together

- **Goal:** Pull the whole study together and move from understanding to response.
- **Review:** Before the summary questions, go through the "Then and Now" chart the group has built. Return to the question from 52:3: "If not with money, then with what?" Let the group answer it in their own words.

- **Priority questions:** 1, 4, and 5.
- **Question 4:** Handle gently. Some members may realize they are still at "we did not esteem Him." Be available to talk privately after the session.
- **Closing Reflection:** Have the group read the personalized version of 53:4–6 aloud together, slowly. Allow a minute of silence before closing in prayer.

I wanted to add one more section here – 10 old testament prophecies that show that Christ was the plan the entire time.

1. Born in Bethlehem – Micah 5:2
2. From David's line, a shoot from a cut stump – Isaiah 11:1
3. A messenger preparing the way – Isaiah 40:3
4. Entering Jerusalem on a donkey – Zechariah 9:9
5. Thirty pieces of sliver, thrown to the potter – Zechariah 11:12-13
6. Silent before His accusers – Isaiah 53:7
7. Pierced hands and feet, garments gambled for – Psalm 22
8. Executed with criminals, buried with the rich – Isaiah 53:9
9. Not abandoned to the grave – Psalm 16:10
10. A light for the nations – Isaiah 49:6

Scripture Sources

Translation texts were read and compared from the following:

- Amplified Bible (AMP): Isaiah 52:13–53:12, AMP, BibleGateway
- King James Version (KJV): Isaiah 52:13–53:12, KJV, BibleGateway
- English Standard Version (ESV): Isaiah 52:13–53:12, ESV, BibleGateway
- New International Version (NIV): Isaiah 52:13–53:12, NIV, BibleGateway
- New American Standard Bible (NASB): Isaiah 52:13–53:12, NASB, BibleGateway
- New Living Translation (NLT): Isaiah 52:13–53:12, NLT, BibleGateway

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Additional Sources for Isaiah 52:1–12

- Amplified Bible (AMP): Isaiah 52:1–12, AMP, BibleGateway
- King James Version (KJV): Isaiah 52:1–12, KJV, BibleGateway
- English Standard Version (ESV): Isaiah 52:1–12, ESV, BibleGateway
- New International Version (NIV): Isaiah 52:1–12, NIV, BibleGateway
- New American Standard Bible (NASB): Isaiah 52:1–12, NASB, BibleGateway
- New Living Translation (NLT): Isaiah 52:1–12, NLT, BibleGateway