

Scripture Text

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Context

In Isaiah 52, God encourages his people in exile by promising to redeem them and make them more glorious than before. He will transform his people into a holy city. On the heels of such a spectacular declaration of salvation, God reveals in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 how he will execute his plan.

Observation and Meaning

- What are the three surprises about the Lord's servant in 52:13-15?
- Why are people unimpressed with the Servant? 53:1-3
- What is the true reason for the Servant's suffering? 53:4-5
- Why are we described as sheep? 53:6
- Why did the Servant not retaliate when he was oppressed? 53:7
- How did the Servant suffer? 53:8-9
- Why did the Servant suffer unjustly for us? 53:10
- How will the Servant be exalted? 53:10-12
- What is the condition for the Servant's exaltation? 53:10
- What are some New Testament passages that help us identify the Servant?

Big Idea

Sinners are enemies of God. However, through the vicarious suffering of the Servant, we can have peace with God. Because the Servant was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, we are healed of the disease of sin. Because God has accepted Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf, we are accounted righteous in his eyes.

Connecting to Bible Storyline

God is just and will not let the sins of his people go unpunished. However, he has graciously sent his Servant to bear his people's punishment so that they might be reconciled to himself. Those who receive the Servant as their savior will be healed and have peace with God. New Testament passages like Philippians 2:5-11 testify that this Servant is Jesus Christ.

Applications

- How has the suffering of the Servant impacted my understanding of salvation?
- How is God challenging me to respond to what the Servant did on my behalf?
- How has the Servant's suffering encouraged me to hold fast to the faith even when facing trials and temptations?
- How does the truth that Jesus died for our sins challenge my individualistic understanding of Christianity?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?
What is the situation of the author and of the readers?
Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?
Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.