

The Lord's Servant Exalted (Isaiah 52:13–15)

Part One

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Introduction

In previous messages we noted the Lord's comforting of Zion, restoring her waste places like Eden, the garden of the Lord (Isaiah 51:3). To accomplish this goal, the Lord declares, "*My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arm will judge the peoples*" (Isaiah 51:5).

The prophet responds with a prayer of seeming desperation (Isaiah 51:9–11). To Isaiah, the glories of Eden seemed far off and elusive in his day of turmoil, spiritual decline, and threats of invasion by terrible enemies. (Sounds like our own times.) Was the Lord sleeping? When would the righteous see the realization of the promises made?

Isaiah 51:1–52:12 forms the introduction to the Lord's Servant, the One who would, through His life and work, bring the promises to realization (Isaiah 52:13–53:12). Let us get into this glorious passage.

I. The Prologue (Isaiah 52:13–15)

1. The Servant is reintroduced: "*Behold my servant*" (vv. 13, 14a).

a. Israel's national failure (Isaiah 41:8, 24)

b. The Lord confirmed His purpose (Isaiah 41:27) but not through national Israel (v. 28).

National Israel was confounded with the false gods that were controlling the people. So, how could the Lord bring about His purposes?

c. The Lord's true Servant introduced (Isaiah 42:1–4)

1) A powerful revelation

2) The reason the Lord preserved his servant, national Israel, was to bring in His true Servant, Jesus Christ the true offspring of Abraham, the seed of Isaac, the son of David of the tribe of Judah, to realize all that He purposed for Zion (the true and believing remnant of the nation).

3) Because the true Servant acts wisely and succeeds, Zion is redeemed (v.14a).

2. The Servant's unconventional method is revealed (vv. 14b, 15).

a. Israel's preconceptions of their Messiah caused them to reject the Lord's servant when He came to them (v. 14).

b. The Lord affirms that His Servant shall act *wisely* and thus be elevated and exalted—glorified (v. 13).

1) Translation differences: "*act wisely*" (ESV); "*deal prudently*" (KJV); "*will prosper*" (NAS); "*achieve success*" (LEX).

2) An explanation: Hebrew term *shakal* can be translated either to be *wise* or to *prosper*. The word describes one who properly understands things and is, therefore, able to do

things with proper wisdom (as per the Proverbs), which, then enables him to prosper or succeed in what he does.

3) God is sovereign. Isaiah clearly demonstrates that Israel's failure and rebellion cannot in the least way prevent God from achieving exactly what He intends to do (Isaiah 14:26, 27; 46:9b–11).

c. In His glorification, the Servant will astonish kings by deeds and truths that have been previously hidden from them (v. 15).

1) Verse 15 begins with the words, "*so shall he sprinkle many nations.*" The Hebrew means to *sprinkle* as in Exodus 29:21. However, the Septuagint renders it "*startle*" in the Greek. This term better fits the context. A homonym in the Hebrew for *startle* sounds like *nazah* (*sprinkle*).

A significant issue, not readily observed by non-Jewish readers, is that only the priests, sons of Levi, were authorized to sprinkle blood in redemptive ritual. Jesus was not a Levite. His sprinkling was a startling thing.

2) The translators of the Septuagint understood more than is credited to them. Think of the scribes who understood that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of Israel's expected King, citing Micah 5:5 to King Herod. However, their sin-darkened hearts blinded them to the truth. If they truly believed Micah 5:5, why did they not rush to Bethlehem to worship Him?

Who in this modern culture thinks for a minute that Jesus Christ is exalted and ruling over all? No one but His own enlightened ones. Everything is fully under His control, and He is successful in accomplishing His Father's purpose.

What Can We Take Away?

1. Are you disturbed and fearful of events in these days? Do you, like Isaiah, want the Lord to awaken from His apparent slumber to flex His mighty arm? Well, He is doing just that. No matter how dark and sinful the days in which we live seem to us, God is in full control and His plan is working out for the glory of God and the exaltation of His Son, Jesus Christ. "*Fear not.*"
2. How much do you know about the truths that are revealed here? Has His Spirit startled you so that you *see* things not previously told you and *understand* things you never heard before? Jesus acted wisely to succeed in coming to earth. Now, through His Spirit, He continues to work wisely through His Zion, the church of the living God. How engaged are you in this work?
3. Has the truth opened your eyes? Do you truly know God? Jesus said to the Jews who thought they knew God, "*Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.*" Are you hearing Him? Do you really know Him?