



ISAIAH 52

ZION REJOICING ~ THE DESPISED SERVANT

Chapter 53 of Isaiah is one of the best-know sections of this book. But that's not the focus of our study tonight. We're in Chapter 52. Although, even a casual look at these two chapters of Isaiah would tend to make you think that whoever it was that separated the bible into chapters blew it on this one. It really doesn't make much sense to put a chapter break between Isaiah 52:15 and 53:1. It just seems like an inappropriate break.

So, where does that leave us with Chapter 52? It's really an invitation into celebration, at least up to verse 13. But, not just a celebration of Judah's release from captivity in Babylon. It's like their Lord was opening their eyes to the freedom to come in Babylon, while at the same time painting a vivid picture of our promised life in eternity. It's like a "double vision!" (Cue the song by Foreigner!) From the Lord's vantage point, being able to see "the end from the beginning," it's all the same to him. Their release from Babylon deserves a party, but wait till you see what God has in store for us in eternity. Our whole life behind us, eternity ahead.

Verse 13 starts out with, "Look!" What is it the Lord wants us to see? What is it that he's about to reveal? Let's take a look...

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 52:1 ¹ Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. ² Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.</p> <p>³ For thus says the LORD: "You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money." ⁴ For thus says the Lord GOD: "My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing. ⁵ Now therefore what have I here," declares the LORD, "seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail," declares the LORD, "and continually all the day my name is despised.</p>	<p>a 52:1 Or "uncircumcised." For the believer today, unclean and detestable thoughts should not enter our souls nor be in our minds (gates).</p> <p>b 52:2 The Hebrew word (na'ar) means "shaking out (of a lion's mane)" or "shaking up and down" and is a homophone for "to growl (like a lion's roar)" (Jer. 51:38).</p> <p>c 52:2 This dust can also include our "dust nature" received from Adam (1 Cor. 15:47-49). We need to crucify it and be clothed with Christ. Part of Satan's curse is that he was to eat dust (Gen. 3:14). Whatever we withhold from God becomes food for the serpent. We shake off (overcome) the "dust" of our old life and rise up in our new life, enthroned with Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:16; Rom. 8:30; Rev. 3:21).</p> <p>d 52:5 See Rom. 2:4.</p>	<p>Zion Rejoicing</p> <p>Isaiah 52:1 "Wake up! Open your eyes! Beautiful Zion, put on your majestic strength! Jerusalem, the sacred city, put on your glory garments! Never again will the unclean a enter your gates! ² Arise and shake b off your dust! c Sit enthroned, Jerusalem! Break off your shackles of bondage from your neck, you captive daughter of Zion!</p> <p>³ For this is what Yahweh has to say: "You were sold for nothing; now you will be redeemed without any payment." ⁴ For Yahweh says: "Long ago, my people went down to Egypt and lived as foreigners there, and for no good reason Assyria oppressed them. ⁵ And now, what have I here?" says Yahweh. "Indeed, my people have been taken into bondage without cause while mocking rulers howl; and every day my name is continually despised!" d says Yahweh.</p>

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Translation (TPT)	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>⁶ Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am.”</p> <p>⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” ⁸ The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion.</p> <p>⁹ Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.</p> <p>¹¹ Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. ¹² For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.</p> <p>¹³ Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. ¹⁴ As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.</p>	<p>e 52:6 Or “Behold, it’s me!”</p> <p>f 52:7 It is a messenger (singular) here, but it becomes a company of messengers in Rom. 10:15. We are told to proclaim the wonderful news—not the bad news that brings despair and fear but the good news of our God, who reigns in the midst of his people.</p> <p>g 52:7 This Hebrew word is remarkably similar to Yeshua, the name of Jesus.</p> <p>h 52:8 Or “They see face-to-face.”</p> <p>i 52:10 This is a metaphor for displaying his righteous power. There is a sense in which Jesus Christ can be seen as God’s holy arm, which God has unveiled to the nations. The miracles of Jesus, his sacrificial death on the cross, and his mighty resurrection were God flexing his muscles, his holy arm. See John 12:37–38; Rom. 10:16.</p> <p>j 52:11 Or “armor-bearers.” These vessels can also be translated “armor” or “(temple) vessels.”</p> <p>k 52:13 This section of Isaiah is perhaps the greatest description of the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, apart from the four Gospels. Up to this point in Isaiah’s writings, the “Servant” has been described as the true Prophet, Teacher, and victorious Redeemer, with no hint whatsoever that his activity would be interrupted by death. But in this section we find him as the unparalleled Suffering Servant and Sin-Bearer who died for us. The prophecy found here is the most remarkable in all of the Old Testament of the sufferings of Jesus Christ and the glory that followed (1 Peter 1:11). Isa. 52:13 through Isa. 53 is quoted in all four Gospels, Acts, Romans, and 1 Peter. It is the epicenter of the gospel.</p> <p>l 52:13 Or “act wisely,” or “prosper” a likely metonymy for “succeed.”</p> <p>m 52:13 This is an obvious reference to God’s Servant-Savior, Jesus, who was raised from the dead and highly exalted at the right hand of God. See Phil. 2:5–11.</p> <p>n 52:15 Or “sprinkle many nations” or “Many nations will marvel at him” (LXX). The words startle and sprinkle share a homonymic root. The idea is that Jesus would sprinkle to cleanse many with his redeeming blood and also that he would startle the nations with his resurrection power and endless life.</p> <p>o 52:15 These kings could refer to both human and demonic.</p> <p>p 52:15 See Rom. 15:21. Vv. 13–15 present Christ as an exalted King, a High Priest who cleanses, and a Prophet who reveals the secrets of God to men.</p>	<p>⁶ “Therefore, my people will know the power of my name, and they will know in that day that I am the one who promised them, saying, ‘Behold, I am here!’” e</p> <p>⁷ What a beautiful sight to behold—the precious feet of the messenger coming over the mountains to announce good news! He comes to refresh us with wonderful news, f announcing salvation g to Zion and saying, “Your Mighty God reigns!” ⁸ Listen! The watchmen are shouting in triumph! Lifting their voices together, they are singing for joy! For right before their eyes, they can see h Yahweh returning to Zion!</p> <p>⁹ Burst into joyous songs, you rubble of Jerusalem! For Yahweh has graciously comforted his people; he has become the Kinsman-Redeemer of Jerusalem! ¹⁰ Yahweh has unveiled his holy arm i before the eyes of all the nations. To the ends of the earth, everyone everywhere will see the salvation of our God!</p> <p>¹¹ Go! Go, and leave Babylon behind! Touch nothing unclean as you depart. Keep your life pure as you leave, you who carry the vessels j of Yahweh! ¹² You will neither have to leave in haste, nor will you make a frantic escape, for your God, Yahweh, will go before you. He will lead you each step and be your rear guard.</p> <p>The Despised Servant</p> <p>¹³ “Look! My servant k will prosper and succeed! l He will be highly honored, raised up, and greatly exalted! m ¹⁴ Just as many were appalled at the sight of him (for so marred was his appearance, like an object of horror; he no longer looked like a man), ¹⁵ so now he will startle n many nations. Kings o will be shocked speechless before him. For they will now see a sight unheard of, and things never considered before now fill their thoughts.” p</p>

Bible Knowledge Commentary

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- **52:1-6.** Jerusalem was to awake not only because her exile was almost ended (v. 1) but also because she would be freshly adorned with new clothes, that is, she would be rebuilt. Jerusalem's pagan conquerors—the uncircumcised and defiled—would never again invade and pollute the holy city (cf. 48:2). This no doubt refers to the time when the Messiah will establish God's kingdom on earth, for only then will pagans never again trample the city. To shake off ... dust means to stop mourning (dust on one's head was a sign of mourning, Job 2:12). Jerusalem will be freed from her chains, never again to be enslaved. She had been sold because of her sins (cf. Isa. 50:1) but now she would be redeemed (IAa¹...g, "to purchase out of slavery"). However, God did not have to buy them. He will graciously bring them back to Him and they will pay nothing.
- Then God briefly reviewed the history of the nation in slavery. They had been slaves in Egypt and more recently Assyria had conquered the Northern Kingdom and also exacted tribute from Judah (52:4). Now another power, Babylon, would take away Judah and mock them (v. 5) and blaspheme God. Through all this the Lord's power to bring them back each time should show the people that He is the only unique God. Eventually when they return in belief they will know Him.
- **The Lord to Return to Zion.**
 - **52:7-8.** The prophet exulted in the good news to be proclaimed when the time of blessing (spoken of in 51:17-52:6) will begin. Though Israel experienced great joy at the return from Babylon in 536 B.C., the joy Isaiah wrote about in 52:7-8 will be when Israel's Messiah returns to Zion to reign. His reign will be one of peace.
- **The Remnant to be Joyful.**
 - **52:9-10.** When the LORD returns, the righteous remnant will sing joyfully because He will have comforted and redeemed His people. This work of grace on their behalf will show all the nations His power (arm; see comments on 40:10) and the salvation He provides. (On the ends of the earth see comments on 5:26.)
- **The Lord's exhortation to return (52:11-12)**
 - **52:11-12.** As in the Exodus out of Egypt and the Exodus away from Babylon, so in Israel's yet-future return, the righteous remnant is exhorted to get away from the evil places where they will be living: Depart, depart. ... come out. However, there will be a difference: they will not have to leave in haste (cf. 48:20). Since the LORD will be with them and will protect them they need have no fear.
- **THE SERVANT TO BE EXALTED (52:13-53:12)** This is perhaps the best-known section in the Book of Isaiah. Several parts of this passage are quoted in the New Testament: Isaiah 52:15 in Romans 15:21; Isaiah 53:1 in John 12:38 and Romans 10:16; Isaiah 53:4 in Matthew 8:17; Isaiah 53:7-8 in Acts 8:32-33; Isaiah 53:9 in 1 Peter 2:22; and Isaiah 53:12 in Luke 22:37. Most of this vivid passage concerns the suffering and rejection of the Servant, but the main point (in Isa. 52:13; 53:11-12) is that His suffering will lead to exaltation and glory. True, the suffering is important, but His glory, which will be revealed, is equally important for it will show that the Servant did the will of God voluntarily. The Servant was rejected (chaps. 49-50), [Vol. 1, p. 1107] and then the remnant was exalted (51:1-52:12). Now the Servant is to be exalted (52:13-53:12).

- **The reaction of the nations** (52:13-15)
 - **52:13.** Two important points are made in this verse: the Servant will act wisely, doing what the Lord wants Him to do, and He will be ... highly exalted. His being lifted up refers not to the kind of death He died on the cross, but to His being exalted at God's right hand (Phil. 2:9; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22).
 - **52:14.** Many will be appalled (this could also be trans. "awestruck or astonished") at the Servant. But who are the "many"? They are probably the people in "many nations" and their "kings" (v. 15). By human standards Jesus was not attractive when He was on the earth (53:3). But when people see Him at His second coming those who did not consider Him important will be absolutely astounded. They will see Him from a new perspective.
 - **52:15.** The Servant will sprinkle people in many nations. "Sprinkle" is associated with cleansing by the priest under the Mosaic Law (Lev. 4:6; 8:11; 14:7). This Servant, whom many have not considered important at all, will actually provide the most important thing for nations and their kings, namely, cleansing from sin (cf. John 1:29; Heb. 10:14). That is why they will shut their mouths. They will be appalled that they had miscalculated the situation so badly. Realizing their great mistake, they will have nothing to say. Eventually, when they see Him exalted in His Second Advent, they will finally understand and see clearly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If there is anything we should invite into our daily lives right now, it's learning to "pay attention" to what's going on around us. We are so easily distracted. Look at these 15 verses and notice just how many times the people of God are being called to pay attention to what was unfolding around them. Give three examples:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
2. All of us struggle with distractions, especially the kind that seem to always pull us away from spending time in God's presence. In your relationship with Jesus, what tends to distract you the most? How have you learned to eliminate these distractions?

3. Isaiah 52:10 says, “Yahweh has unveiled his holy arm i before the eyes of all the nations. To the ends of the earth, everyone everywhere will see the salvation of our God!” What is God’s holy arm? What is it about his holy arm that opens the door for them to “see” the salvation of God?

4. Do you like to celebrate? Why or why not. Why do you think a lot of people hold back when it comes to a great celebration? When was the last time you cut loose in an atmosphere of celebration? How did it feel to finally let go?

5. As we prepare for Chapter 53 of Isaiah, how can you position to really enjoy God, yet still fully embrace the nature of the Suffering Servant? In particular, how can you keep yourself from from becoming presumptuous? How can you “preach” yourself into staying alert to what’s going on in and around you?