

Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Lecture 17

Servant of the Lord Theme Continued

Isaiah 50:4-11

Isaiah 50:5-6 Character of the Servant

We continue our discussion of the servant theme. We were in chapter 50 at the close of last hour. We didn't quite finish that. That's the third major passage--let me put this chart up as we start just for review. We are down on the chart at Isaiah 50:4-11.

Remember in this passage, it stresses on the humiliation of the servant, and you read in verse 6: "I gave my back to the smiters, my cheeks to them that plucked off my hair." Verse 5 before is very important because it speaks of the character of the servant: "I was not rebellious, neither turned backward." So it seems clear from this passage, with the voluntary suffering and the character of the servant, that it must be an individual and one distinguished from Israel as a nation. I think we had discussed down through verse 7 where it says: "For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded. Therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." I mentioned that Luke 9:53 says that Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. So let's pick up from that point and look at verses 8 through 11 of Isaiah chapter 50.

Isaiah 50:8-9 One Being Helped by the Servant is Speaking

Verses 8 and 9 read: "He is near who justifies me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together, who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall grow old like a garment; the moth shall eat them up."

In verses 8 and 9, I think there is a question whether it is the servant who continues to speak. The servant has been speaking in verse 6: "I gave my back to the smiters," and verse 7: "the Lord will help me." The question is: is the servant continuing to speak and declaring his certainty that God will enable him to finish the work he has been called to do, or is it one of those speaking who believes in the finished work of the servant--the finished work of Christ--and then who proclaims that the one who has

justified me is near? I am inclined to think the latter: “He is near who justifies me.” In other words, the one speaking here is not the servant but one who trusts in the work of the servant. And because the one who has justified him is near, then he is ready to face any adversary with the knowledge that he is safe because God has procured his justification and God is ready to protect him. And then all who oppose the work of God will grow old like a garment (the last phrase of verse 9), “Moths shall eat them up.” Only those who are true to the Lord remain safe forever.

Isaiah 50:10-11 – 2 Groups of People

Now whether that transition is in verses 8 and 9, you can perhaps debate that, but I think you are clearly into a transition in verses 10 and 11. Verses 10 and 11 begin: “Who is among you that fears the LORD.” The servant is no longer speaking there, this is addressed to other people. In verses 10 and 11 you have a statement addressed to two classes of people, one class in 10, another class in 11. First it’s those who fear the LORD: “Who is among you that fears the LORD.” And second, verse 11, is addressed to another group, those who kindle opposition to the Lord or instigate opposition to the Lord. Verse 10 says: “Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of his servant,” follows the servant, “that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely upon his God.” Verse 11 says: “Behold, all you that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of mine hand; you shall lie down in sorrow.” So statements addressed to two classes of people. The first class: those that trust the Lord: “Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of the servant?” But then a rather surprising statement: “that walks in darkness, and has no light, let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely upon his God.” I think the point there is, those that trust the Lord should do so even though they cannot see the way ahead; they don’t know what the future holds, but they can safely trust in God and know that God will be with them and bring them through. So even believers, in a sense, walk in darkness because none of us

know what is before us. Yet in light of that we are to trust the Lord and be confident and assured that he will be with us.

The contrast to that is in verse 11 that tells the fate of those who try to walk in the light of their own devices: “Behold, all you that kindle a fire, encompass yourself about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire.” People that try to walk in the light of their own devices. What verse 11 says is that by their own fires they are going to perish. They will lie down in everlasting sorrow and torment. So these two verses point out two possibilities: you may accept the finished work of the servant and trust in the servant and enjoy the peace that comes from that, in knowing that God is with you; or you can resist the Lord, try to walk in the light of your own devices, oppose the work of the servant, and you will lie down in sorrow.

So that’s the end of this next to the last servant passage, that’s number 9, Isaiah 50:4-11. Notice I’ve underlined the major passages. That’s the third major passage. And that brings us to the final passage, which is the fourth major one, Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12.

4. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Servant Distinct from Israel

Alright, Isaiah 52:13. Here we come to the climactic passage about the redemptive work of the servant. The interesting thing is it’s the last time that the word “servant” is mentioned in the book of Isaiah. You read that in verse 13: “Behold my servant shall deal prudently.” It’s the last explicit reference to the servant. Subsequent to this climactic passage you do have the plural use of the term. After this you read about the servants (plural) of God, but never the servant (singular). In other words, what follows focuses on those who follow the servant, and those who then are the servants of the Lord. But this is the climax of the work of the servant himself. It’s unfortunate that the chapter division is between 52:15 and 53:1. It would have been far better to put the chapter division after 52:12, because verses 13-15 of 52 flows right on into chapter 53 and it’s certainly a unit. So after 53 you see the results of the work of the servant and that there’s a progression, but I wouldn’t call that chronology, I’d say it’s progression in development of the idea of

the servant. At first it is not too clear; there are a lot of questions you can ask, but it gradually takes on more shape and more form as it fills out and as it develops. But after 53, then you move into not so much the work of the servant as the results of the work of the servant and what implications are working out.

Prior to 52:13 and following, we've had some hints that the servant is distinct from Israel. That became particularly clear in 49:5 and 6 where the servant is to bring Jacob again to God. And in verse 6: "It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give you for a light to the nations." In other words, in 49:5 and 6, it's quite clear there's a distinction made between the servant and Israel. The servant is from Israel, out of Israel, but is distinct from Israel. Then in chapter 50, that we've just looked at, when the servant says, "I was not rebellious, neither turned backward," certainly that can't apply to the nation of Israel.

So we've seen hints of that and then it becomes clear in 49. He is Israel in a certain sense because he comes out of Israel and represents Israel, but he can be distinguished from the nation as a whole. This servant then is called to perform a great work: to be a light to the Gentiles. Israel has fallen into sin. It's impossible for Israel to carry out the great task of bringing light to the nations. Israel is blind, how can she bring light? So the work is to be carried out by the one who represents Israel.

O.T. Allis on Isaiah 53 Many Hold Servant's the Suffering Nation

Now look at your citations, page 30. I've taken a couple paragraphs there from O. T. Allis' book, *The Unity of Isaiah*, which is quite a good little booklet. Notice what he says on this question of who is the servant. Is it the nation Israel, or is it someone distinguished from Israel? Is it Messianic? He says: "This fact is illustrated by the following statement regarding Isaiah 53 which was made some years ago, but would apply equally well to the present situation: 'The majority of the Christian scholars now hold the Jewish interpretation, that though the picture is highly individualized, it still refers to the suffering nation.'"

When he says the majority of Christian scholars, that's speaking broadly. He is quoting someone else there. Undoubtedly, if you look at the field of academic study of the Bible from Protestant or Catholic schools, that would be a true statement. You could debate whether you want to call them Christian scholars, perhaps, but they would call themselves that. He says, "This statement is too sweeping even if the word critical were substituted for Christian, as in all fairness should be done." For while, as we have seen, the "suffering nation" interpretation is widely held by critical scholars, there are other solutions that are or have been more or less popular. The reason for the quotation is that the writer did not hesitate to describe what he regarded as the most generally accepted critical interpretation as the "Jewish interpretation."

Early Jewish Interpretation: Messianic

It is important to note, therefore, that there is good and reliable evidence to show that this was not the original Jewish interpretation. The Targum of Jonathan, recognized as official by the Babylonian Talmud, begins Isaiah 52:13 with the words: "Behold, my servant, the Messiah, shall prosper." Targums are Aramaic translations of the Hebrew usually with some paraphrase. But the Targum of Jonathan identifies the servant as the Messiah. So there is other evidence that the Messianic interpretation was current among the Jews in early times despite the fact that the description of the humiliation, death and resurrection of the servant constituted a problem, which they were naturally quite unable to solve. It was apparently not until the Middle Ages that distinguished Jewish scholars, such as Rashi, Ibn Ezra, etc. adopted the "Israel interpretation," although that interpretation was known as early as the time of Origen. And so far as they understood the Christian interpretation of view, their object in adopting this rival interpretation was to destroy the connection between the Old Testament prophecy and what they believed to be the mistakenly alleged fulfillment of it recorded in the New Testament in the death of Jesus of Nazareth. See, that is a powerful Christian argument for Jesus being the Messiah.

NT Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah 53

A special reason for calling attention to this matter is that it raises the vitally important question: how can scholars who profess to be Christians accept an interpretation that is designed and intended to destroy the connection between the Old Testament, which they and the Jews accept, and the New Testament, which they accept and the Jews reject, and at the same time expect to maintain that connection between the two, which for centuries Christians, on the basis of the expressed claims of the New Testament, regarded perfectly obvious? How can they break down the bridge and maintain the connection intact? Or are they ready to confess that the Jews are right in maintaining that there is no such connection? Which must mean, of course, that the New Testament writers were then mistaken when they so interpreted the prophecy? Are these scholars ready to confess that the Jews were right in maintaining that there is no such connection, which must mean of course that the New Testament writers were mistaken when they so interpreted the prophecy?" Continuing with Oswalt, "For the Jews, if they reject the Messianic interpretation, the question is simply: who is referred to in the prophecy of the Suffering Servant? For the Christian, if he has any regard for the traditional belief of the Church or for the teachings of the New Testament, the question is a double one: if the prophecy is not a prediction of the sufferings of Christ, what is it in for and how is its New Testament interpretation to be accounted for" because in the New Testament it's quite clearly appealed to as applied to Christ. In the New Testament the Church is viewed as spiritually the seed of Abraham. And there is certainly a unity then in the people of God. And in a sense, then, the Church certainly participates in the promises and blessings that were promised to Israel in the spiritual sense. But that distinction of national versus spiritual, I think, is still one that is also there at the same time, so you have to do justice to both.

We could go into that in more detail, but I think there is good, solid evidence that even among Jewish interpreters, particularly prior to the Middle Ages, there was the view that this was to be understood as a Messianic prophecy, not as a reference to the nation.

So that it's not only a Christian view, there is also good evidence of Jewish adherence to that understanding. Question?

Student comment: I just read through my book *Jews for Jesus* and it noted that in their reading in the synagogue they stop after Isaiah 52:12 and jump right to Isaiah 53:1, skipping 52:13-15. Vannoy's response: That's interesting.

General Comments on Isaiah 53

Alright, a couple other comments just of general nature before we start looking at it verse by verse. Another thing I think is interesting is that from Isaiah 40 on there is a great deal of stress on the matter of return from exile. Yet when you come to this climactic passage of this series of servant passages, there's absolutely no reference to the exile at all. The exile sort of faded out of the picture; it's not even alluded to. But I think what's going on here, in this climactic passage, is God's answer to the more basic problem: the problem that's behind the exile, and that's the problem of sin. In fact, that's the problem why Israel couldn't fulfill the work of the servant, because Israel had sinned. It's sin that has caused the exile; it's sin which causes all the ills of humanity, and it is that issue that is dealt with in this passage.

Isaiah 52:1-12 Song of Joy

Now we haven't looked at Isaiah 52:1-12, but it is a song of joy. Look at verse 7: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation; that saith unto Zion, your God reigns!" Verse 9: "Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see salvation of God." There is a great hymn of joy in 52:1-12. And what you find in 52:13 and following is the reason for the joy: sin has been atoned for. The work of the servant is that which solves the sin problem.

Isaiah 52:13 Success of the Servant

So let's look at the passage itself. Verse 13: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and be extolled, and be very high." Verse 13 announces the success of the servant in carrying out his work. I read from the King James: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently." The Hebrew term there is *yaskil*, the verb form. It's translated "deal prudently." The basic idea of the word is "to act wisely," and that is "to be wise in doing things in a way that will bring results." So it's frequently translated "prosper." Notice the NIV says: "See, my servant will act wisely," with a text translation note: or "*will prosper*." The rest of the verse consists of three verbs for exaltation. They are: *nasah*, *rum*, and *davah*. All of them have the idea of exaltation. You notice the King James says: "He shall be exalted, be extolled, and be very high." NIV says: "He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." But they all have similar meanings. The King James says for that second one "be extolled." It's literally "to be lifted up." So, "he shall be high, he shall be lifted up and be very high." Now Delitzsch in his commentary has an interesting suggestion at that point. He says, with these three verbs, "Here we have his resurrection. He shall be high—his ascension—he shall be lifted up." I would, I think, hesitate to say that is being taught on the basis of those verbs. I think it's more likely the verbs emphasize success by repetition and parallelism: he shall be raised, lifted up and highly lifted up. But certainly the success of the work of the servant is in view in verse 13.

Isaiah 53:14 Humiliation of Israel and the Servant

When you come to chapter 52, verse 14, you have a contrast. Verse 14 reads, I'm reading from the King James, and we'll look at some of the translation questions: "As many were astounded at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations," as it flows on into verse 15. In contrast to verse 13, verse 14 moves from the exaltation of Christ to his previous humiliation. Right at that point you have something that probably would be very hard for the initial hearers and readers of this to understand. There has been some suggestion

before of humiliation, in the servant passage of 49:7a: “Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despises.” And in the one in chapter 50:6: “I gave my back to the smiters.” But there has been just brief suggestions about the humiliation of the servant.

I think that chapter 52, verse 14, is not translated well in the King James, nor in the NIV, for that matter. For this reason, if you look at the Hebrew structure it really centers around *tasher ken ken*. It seems to me, and I don't quite understand why in both the King James and the NIV, but the translators really missed the structure. The word ‘so’ at the beginning of the second phrase in Hebrew is *ki*. And the King James says: “As many were astounded at thee; his visage was so marred...” and it really should read: “as many as were astounded at thee; **so** his visage was marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men; **so** shall he sprinkle many nations.” See that *ken, ken* is that “so, so.” And there is a structure set up there, and it is this: “as many as were astonished or astounded at thee.”

Who is the “thee?” I think the “thee” is Israel. Israel is in exile; Israel is suffering. “So as many as were astounded at thee,” people were horrified at Israel because of the suffering they went through. Israel is the addressee all through chapter 52. “So as many as were astounded at you, O Israel. So in a similar way.” It's a comparison. “So in a similar way, his visage was marred more than any man.” So as many as were astounded or horrified at you, Israel, so, similarly, his visage was marred more than any man, that is the servant. So there is a comparison between the humiliation of the servant and the humiliation of Israel.

Yet, when you think about the comparison, you have to realize at the same time there is an important difference between the two humiliations. The humiliation of Israel is the result of sin. It's proof of Israel's inability to carry out the work that was assigned to her. The humiliation of the servant, on the other hand, is not due to any sin of his own; yet, he must undergo humiliation. And the question is: why? The answer to that question is in the next phrase, which is this second “so”. “As many as were astounded at you Israel, so his visage was marred more than any man, his form more than the sons of men.

So shall he sprinkle many nations.” This “so” is in the sense of a result. So you see just as--*kasher*, so in a similar way--the servant’s visage is marred, so as a result he shall sprinkle many nations. I think that’s the structure, the way it flows.

Isaiah 52:15 on “Sprinkle many nations”

So you get that interesting statement: “So he shall sprinkle many nations.” As a result of being humiliated, he will sprinkle many nations. The word translated “sprinkled” is *nazah*. That is the word repeatedly used in Leviticus for the ceremonial cleansing of objects in the tabernacle. So it carries that idea of cleansing; sometimes that was done with water, sometimes it’s done with blood. But these objects were sprinkled to purify them. So I think when you read: “So he shall sprinkle many nations,” the purpose of the humiliation is to cleanse many nations.

So right at the beginning of this climactic passage you have the central idea of the whole passage touched on: the servant is to cleanse or purify many nations as a result of his humiliation. And he will go through that humiliation, but the result of it is the purification of the nations. Now, that’s at the heart of the message of the passage. Yet if you look at the Revised Standard Version, for example, you will read: “So shall he startle many nations.” “Sprinkle” is taken out and it reads: “So shall he startle many nations.” There’s a footnote, and you might think the footnote will say: “or sprinkle.” The footnote says: “the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.” That’s a footnote in the RSV. The word *nazah* occurs 24 times. 4 times in the Qal, 20 times in the Hiphil. This is a Hiphil form. It’s *always* translated “sprinkle.” So I don’t think there is any question what it means as it is used in many other contexts, where it’s always translated “sprinkle.” There is no contrary evidence that that isn’t its meaning here. I think the only problem is, some may feel the word doesn’t make sense in this context.

The Septuagint translates the phrase: “thus shall many nations wonder at him,” *thaumazw*. “Thus shall many nations wonder at him.” That seems to be based on the parallelism in the passage, “as many were astounded,” and then many wonder. It’s sort of parallel with that. But the Hebrew text itself is clear: it says “sprinkle.” It’s not as the

RSV says: the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain. It's a perfectly normal, third masculine singular form. See, just as they—many--were appalled at him, you see the “so” then: “so his appearance was disfigured beyond that of any man, deformed beyond human likeness; *so* will he sprinkle the nations.” That's the “so, so” structure. I don't understand why the King James and the NIV both translate it the way they do.

What's the NASV have? That follows what I was saying: “so so,” just as “so so.” The Anchor Bible says for this phrase: “So shall he sprinkle many nations,” It says: “So many nations will be astonished.” The footnote in the Anchor Bible says: “Conjectural emendation based on the versions.” In fact, if you look at the Hebrew Bible footnotes on this word, it's really amazing. The phrase reads “So he will sprinkle many nations.” It is perfectly straightforward and clear. If you look at the old Hebrew Bible that L-F-R-T means “read perhaps.” —you make it a plural, 3rd masculine plural. No manuscript evidence just says, “read perhaps.” That's a conjectural emendation. For P-R-P-S, the editor proposes third masculine plural Qal Imperfect *ragaz* “be agitated.” Conjectural emendation. No manuscript evidence exists to support that conjectural emendation. Or B-E-L, that is, or 3rd masculine plural Hiphil imperfect, “bow down.” You come to BHS, that's all been changed, but you, one proposal is, it has been proposed, *nazah* can mean, in its root meaning, “to spurt” or “spatter.” I think that's how some people try to get “startle” out of “spurt” or “spatter.” So then you see “The nations will be startled” instead of “He will sprinkle the nations.” Or then they purely conjecture this form of “*ragaz*,” same as up here, be agitated or *bazah* “despise.” But it's just amazing the amount of conjectural emendation that's proposed in order to substitute something for a word that's perfectly clear.

If you look at 1 Peter 1:2: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ is that purifying agent.

Now, if you go back to Isaiah 52, verse 15, then you have a bad verse division there. The first phrase of verse 15 really goes with 14: “As many were astounded at you, so his visage was marred more than any man, his form more than the sons of men: So he

will sprinkle many nations.” You would think “sprinkle” so clearly because that word is used in Leviticus, as I mentioned, 24 times of sprinkling. So the first phrase of verse 15 goes better with the last part of 14 than with what follows in 15. So the verse division there is again poor. But when you get to 15 then, you find that kings are filled with awe from that which they see; it’s something that they would not have believed possible: “The kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.” So the result is prominent people are affected by this work of the servant. So by means of humiliation the servant accomplished, and accomplishes his work. He sprinkles the nations for cleansing and the result is prominent people are affected by it.

Well, some have said that the idea of startle is found by assuming that just as one causes water or blood to jump when you sprinkle it, so he causes the nations to jump or leap. And some would suggest there is a similar Arabic root that means to leap. But usually, as you notice in the BHS Hebrew text, it’s simply suggested that we must make a conjectural emendation because so some think it doesn’t make sense the way it is. If you really had a text that absolutely made no sense, you might search for an emendation like that, but it seems that in a case like this, where you have other uses of the term, and the other uses of the term are quite clear, and the idea of sprinkling or the sense of purification is a quite common concept, that there is no need to be looking for some sort of rather obscure alternative source for the meaning of “sprinkle.”

Isaiah 53:1-2 Few Believe, Humble Origins of the Servant

Let’s go on to Isaiah 53:1: “Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” Here you have a rhetorical question. Young suggests it’s designed to call attention to the few who believe. “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” In other words, the unexpected nature of the way in which the Lord has brought salvation means that many people don’t recognize its true meaning. There are few who believe. “Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”

The reason for that attitude is given in verse 2: “For he shall grow up before him like a tender plant, and like a root out of the dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” In verse 2, first of all, you find his origin is not what one might have expected. He grows up like a tender plant, like a root out of dry ground. It’s a humble origin. And then also, he doesn’t have the outward attractiveness that you might expect of a deliverer. He comes from Israel, and Israel at the time of Christ was an insignificant nation. Who would think that from that small, insignificant group would come one who will bring deliverance to the world? He is a root out of dry ground. He has no form nor comeliness; he died the death of a criminal. Certainly the cross isn’t a picture of what you would expect of a conqueror, a deliverer. He wasn’t the general of a great army; he wasn’t a great political figure. So verse 2 doesn’t refer to his character or to his life in which there was great beauty, but to his humble origin and to his death. He grew up like a root out of dry ground, he had no form nor comeliness. There is no beauty that we should desire him.

Isaiah 53:3 Man of Pain and Wounds

Isaiah 53, verse 3, says, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief; we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” Verse 3 continues the description of the sorrow and misery connected with his death. He was conspired against by people of his own nation. He was subjected to torture and death at the hands of the Romans. The King James translates there: “He was despised and rejected; a man of **sorrows**, and acquainted with **grief**.” Those two words I think are translated a bit too broadly in the King James: sorrows and grief. The first one is a masculine noun that means “pain.” The second one is a noun that means “sickness,” or “disease,” or “pain that comes from wounds.” So I think what’s in view there: he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. The sorrows and the grief are referring to the physical pain that he bore in the time of his suffering. That flows on into verse 4.

Isaiah 53:4 What He Did and What We Thought: Christ's Healing Ministry

Verse 4: "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." The words "griefs" and "sorrows" are the same words there, but they're narrower than the translation suggests. I don't think they indicate sorrow and grief in general, but more specifically physical injury, sickness. I think a better translation is: he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains. Look at page 31-32 of your citations. I've taken a paragraph there from Dr. MacRae's *Gospel of Isaiah*. It's a couple paragraphs. Let's look at this and then we'll take a break. Page 31 of your citation page, which comes from page 136-138 from the *Gospel of Isaiah*, MacRae says, "Verse 4 has often has been misunderstood largely because two quite specific words have been taken in a rather general sense. The Hebrew makes a sharp contrast between the first and second parts of the verse. It puts a great stress on the pronoun *he* at the beginning of the first part, in contrast to a similarly emphasized *we* in the second part. You see: 'Surely *he* hath borne our griefs, carried our sorrows: yet *we* did esteem him stricken, smitten of God,' presenting the contrast between what he did and what we thought.

This contrast is further indicated by the fact that the verse begins with a Hebrew word generally translated *surely*, or *truly*. In the attempt to bring out the contrast more fully this word has been rendered as 'indeed' in the translation above." That's MacRae's own translation. "The first two words in the verse are common Hebrew words for carrying or lifting, and generally also involve the idea of removing something, or taking it away. The nouns used with them are literal words for physical suffering and infirmities. The King James rendering 'griefs and sorrows' is much too general.

The clause pictures the healing ministry of Christ. This is clearly stated in Matthew 8:16-17 where it is said that his healing works were done 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet saying: He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. In the last part of this verse the observers confess their error: even though they had seen his great miracles, they had completely misunderstood the situation when he was seized and killed. It grieved them that such a good man can be

‘stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.’ That was doubtless the feeling of many who were later converted on the day of Pentecost. It was certainly true of the disciples on the road to Emmaus as they told the man whom they took for a stranger about their great sorrow over the death of the one whom they had seen work so many miracles and whom they had hoped would have redeemed Israel. But it seemed like that hope was gone. Jesus himself pointed to his great miracles of healing as evidence of the truth of his claims. This is brought out clearly in John 5:36, 10:38, 14:11: Those who had seen his great miracles of healing had failed to put full confidence in his claims to be divine. Now, however, they realized that his death was not the result divine displeasure, but had an entirely different meaning which is brought out in Isaiah 53:5. Interpreters sometimes read the atonement back into the first half of verse 4: ‘Surely he hath borne our griefs, carried our sorrows’ translated ‘pain and diseases’ in the general sense of grief, sufferings, and sorrow. However, even if translated in this general way, ‘griefs and sorrows’ are not a normal way of expressing the idea of sin. Many Bibles give marginal references here to Matthew 8:16-17 and to I Peter 2:24. Actually, I Peter 2:24 is only one word in common with the first half of Isaiah 53:4, the word *bore*. The verse gives a clear statement of the atonement of Christ and quotes from Isaiah 53:5, but it’s a mistake to think of it as also quoting from verse 4.”

So you see MacRae’s point is that verse 4 is not really talking about the atoning work of Christ in that first part of it: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,” as the King James translates it. It’s talking about the healing ministry of Christ which should have been evidence of who he was. Yet, when people saw his miracles and then later saw him crucified, which is when they esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, they failed to recognize who he was in spite of the fact of the miracles he had performed. So the contrast is what he did and yet what those who saw him did in response. The “we”: “We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” So they saw his works, yet thought that the fact that he was taken and crucified proved him not to be the Savior. So they were perplexed.

Now let’s take a 10 minute break before we continue with Isaiah 53:5 and 6.

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