

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 17, Servant of the Lord Theme Continued Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 17, Servant of the Lord Theme Continued, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Robert Vannoy explores key passages in Isaiah relating to the "Servant of the Lord" theme. It focuses on Isaiah 50:4-11, highlighting the servant's voluntary suffering, obedience, and the contrasting fates of those who trust in the Lord versus those who rely on their own devices. **Vannoy then examines Isaiah 52:13-53:12, considered the climactic servant passage.** This section addresses the servant's success, humiliation, and the resulting purification of nations, analyzing translation nuances and differing interpretations. **The lecture includes a discussion of Old Testament scholar O.T. Allis's views on the interpretation of Isaiah 53.** Vannoy highlights that despite many scholars believing the servant referred to the suffering nation of Israel, there is evidence that early Jewish scholars considered it a Messianic prophecy. **The lecture closes by analyzing Isaiah 53, discussing the servant's humble origins, the disbelief he faced, his role in bearing sickness and pain, and ultimately, the atoning work he performs.**

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 17 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Major Prophets.



**Vannoy_MP_Session
17.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 17, Servant of the Lord Theme Continued

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's lecture on Isaiah, focusing primarily on Isaiah 50:4-11 and Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Briefing Document: Robert Vannoy on Isaiah (Servant Theme)

Main Themes:

- **The Suffering Servant:** Vannoy's lecture centers on the "Servant of the Lord" theme in Isaiah, particularly focusing on key passages that describe the servant's character, suffering, and ultimate triumph. He emphasizes the voluntary nature of the servant's suffering and the distinction between the servant and the nation of Israel.
- **Humiliation vs. Exaltation:** A recurring motif is the stark contrast between the servant's initial humiliation and his subsequent exaltation. This is particularly evident in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.
- **The Servant's Cleansing Work:** Vannoy highlights the servant's role in cleansing and purifying many nations through his suffering.
- **Two Groups of People:** In relation to Isaiah 50:10-11, Vannoy identifies two distinct groups: those who fear the Lord and trust in the servant, even in darkness, and those who rely on their own devices and face sorrow.
- **Interpretation and Context:** Vannoy stresses the importance of proper interpretation, considering the Hebrew text, historical context, and potential mistranslations. He also discusses varying interpretations among Jewish and Christian scholars.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Isaiah 50:4-11:** This passage emphasizes the humiliation and voluntary suffering of the servant. Verse 5 ("I was not rebellious, neither turned backward") underscores the servant's character. Vannoy suggests that verses 8-9 may be spoken by one who trusts in the servant's finished work, rather than by the servant himself. Verses 10-11 address two groups: those who fear the Lord and trust in Him even in darkness, and those who rely on their own devices, who will "lie down in sorrow."

- **Isaiah 52:13-53:12:** This is the climactic passage on the redemptive work of the servant. Vannoy notes it is the last explicit mention of the singular "servant" in Isaiah, with subsequent references using the plural "servants." He argues that verses 13-15 of chapter 52 should be grouped with chapter 53, forming a unified passage.
- **Servant Distinct from Israel:** Vannoy argues that Isaiah 49:5-6 and 50:5 indicate a clear distinction between the servant and the nation of Israel. The servant comes from Israel but is distinct from the nation as a whole and is tasked with being a light to the Gentiles, a task Israel cannot fulfill due to its sin.
- **Interpretations of Isaiah 53:** Vannoy discusses the historical debate over whether the "suffering servant" refers to the nation of Israel or a Messianic figure. He notes that while many modern scholars interpret it as the suffering nation, early Jewish interpretations (e.g., the Targum of Jonathan) identified the servant as the Messiah. He quotes O.T. Allis: "'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.'" Vannoy questions why Christian scholars would adopt an interpretation designed to undermine the connection between the Old and New Testaments.
- **Isaiah 52:13-15 Analysis:** Vannoy delves into a detailed analysis of Isaiah 52:14-15, challenging the translations in the King James Version (KJV) and NIV. He argues that the Hebrew structure indicates a comparison between the humiliation of Israel and the humiliation of the servant. He emphasizes the "so...so" structure (kasher ken ken): "As many as were astounded at thee [Israel]; so his visage was marred more than any man... So shall he sprinkle many nations." He interprets "sprinkle" (nazah) as referring to the ceremonial cleansing, suggesting the servant purifies many nations through his humiliation. He criticizes the RSV's translation of "startle" and the accompanying footnote claiming the Hebrew word's meaning is uncertain, citing 1 Peter 1:2 as supporting the "sprinkling" interpretation.
- **Isaiah 53:1-2:** Vannoy notes that few believe the report of the servant, and that this is because the servant's origins were humble: "He shall grow up before him like a tender plant, and like a root out of the dry ground." The servant lacked outward attractiveness and died a criminal's death, contrary to expectations of a deliverer.

- **Isaiah 53:3-4:** Vannoy explains that the words translated as "sorrows" and "grief" in the KJV should be more specifically understood as physical "pain" and "sickness" or "pain from wounds." He quotes Dr. MacRae: "'Verse 4 has often has been misunderstood largely because two quite specific words have been taken in a rather general sense...The nouns used with them are literal words for physical suffering and infirmities.'" MacRae argues that this verse refers to Christ's healing ministry, as confirmed by Matthew 8:16-17, and contrasts what Christ *did* (heal) with what people *thought* (that he was stricken by God).

Key Quotes:

- "I gave my back to the smiters, my cheeks to them that plucked off my hair. I was not rebellious, neither turned backward." (Isaiah 50:6, 5; quoted to emphasize the servant's character and voluntary suffering)
- "Behold my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and be extolled, and be very high." (Isaiah 52:13; quoted to highlight the success and exaltation of the servant)
- "As many were astounded at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man..." (Isaiah 52:14; quoted to illustrate the contrast between exaltation and humiliation and the comparison between Israel's suffering and the servant's)
- "So shall he sprinkle many nations..." (Isaiah 52:15; Vannoy's preferred translation, emphasizing the servant's cleansing work)
- "Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1; quoted to show the unexpected nature of salvation)
- "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." (Isaiah 53:3; quoted to describe the sorrow and misery connected with the servant's death)
- "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." (Isaiah 53:4; quoted to highlight the contrast between what the servant did and what people thought of him)

Areas for Further Investigation:

- The specific historical context surrounding the different interpretations of the Suffering Servant passages (Jewish vs. Christian).
- The textual basis for alternative translations of Isaiah 52:14-15, especially the RSV's "startle."
- The relationship between the "sprinkling" imagery in Isaiah 52:15 and its significance in Levitical law and the New Testament.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 17, Servant of the Lord Theme Continued

Isaiah: Servant of the Lord Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Vannoy, what two classes of people are addressed in Isaiah 50:10-11?
2. What is unique about Isaiah 52:13 in relation to the term "servant?"
3. According to Vannoy, how is the servant distinct from Israel in Isaiah 49:5-6?
4. What is the "Jewish interpretation" of Isaiah 53 that O.T. Allis refers to, and why does Allis find it problematic?
5. Why, according to Vannoy, does the climactic passage about the servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 make no reference to the exile?
6. What does the Hebrew term *yaskil*, used in Isaiah 52:13, mean, and how is it translated?
7. What is the significance of the word *nazah* (translated as "sprinkle" in Isaiah 52:15) in the context of Leviticus?
8. How does Vannoy interpret the "so, so" structure in Isaiah 52:14?
9. According to Isaiah 53:1, why do many people not believe the "report" about the servant?
10. According to MacRae, what sharp contrast does Isaiah 53:4 highlight, and how does this relate to Christ's ministry?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Isaiah 50:10-11 addresses those who fear the Lord and obey the voice of the servant, even though they may be walking in darkness, and those who kindle opposition to the Lord and try to walk in the light of their own devices. The first group is encouraged to trust in the Lord, while the second is warned of everlasting sorrow.

2. Isaiah 52:13 is the last explicit reference to the singular "servant" in the book of Isaiah; after this passage, the text refers to the plural "servants" of God, focusing on those who follow the servant. This passage marks the climax of the work of the servant himself.
3. In Isaiah 49:5-6, the servant is called to bring Jacob back to God and to be a light to the Gentiles, which makes him distinct from Israel. The servant comes from Israel, but he is set apart to perform a task that Israel, due to its sin, is unable to fulfill.
4. The "Jewish interpretation" of Isaiah 53, according to O.T. Allis, identifies the suffering servant as the nation of Israel, not a distinct individual or the Messiah. Allis finds this problematic because it undermines the connection between Old Testament prophecy and the New Testament's interpretation of Jesus as the Messiah.
5. According to Vannoy, the exile fades from the picture in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 because this climactic passage focuses on the more basic problem of sin, which is behind the exile. This passage deals with the issue that prevents Israel from fulfilling the work of the servant.
6. The Hebrew term *yaskil* in Isaiah 52:13 means "to act wisely" or "to be wise in doing things in a way that will bring results" and is frequently translated as "prosper." This term announces the success of the servant in carrying out his work.
7. The word *nazah*, translated as "sprinkle," is repeatedly used in Leviticus for the ceremonial cleansing of objects in the tabernacle, carrying the idea of purification. Therefore, in Isaiah 52:15, "sprinkling many nations" is connected to cleansing or purifying them from sin.
8. Vannoy interprets the "so, so" structure in Isaiah 52:14 as a comparison between the humiliation of Israel and the humiliation of the servant, as well as a cause-and-effect relationship between the servant's humiliation and his ability to sprinkle many nations. He translates, "as many as were astounded at you, O Israel, so, similarly, his visage was marred more than any man...so as a result he shall sprinkle many nations."
9. According to Isaiah 53:1, many people do not believe the "report" about the servant because the way in which the Lord has brought salvation is unexpected,

and therefore, its true meaning is not recognized. The humble origins and outward appearance of the servant contribute to this lack of belief.

10. According to MacRae, Isaiah 53:4 highlights the contrast between what Christ did and what people thought. MacRae states, "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." Specifically, while Christ performed miracles of healing (bearing their sicknesses and pains), the people considered him stricken and smitten by God when he was crucified, failing to recognize his true identity.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the different interpretations of the "servant" in Isaiah, focusing on the contrast between the Messianic view and the view that the servant represents the nation of Israel. What evidence does Vannoy present to support the Messianic interpretation?
2. Explain the significance of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 as the climactic passage of the servant theme in Isaiah. How does this passage build upon earlier hints and references to the servant's character and mission?
3. Analyze Vannoy's interpretation of Isaiah 52:14-15, paying particular attention to his translation and explanation of the "so, so" structure. How does his interpretation differ from that of the King James Version and the NIV, and what is the significance of the word *nazah* in this context?
4. Explore the themes of humiliation and exaltation in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. How are these themes intertwined, and what do they reveal about the nature of the servant's work and identity?
5. Discuss the relationship between the Old Testament prophecies about the suffering servant and the New Testament's interpretation of Jesus as the fulfillment of these prophecies. How do scholars and interpreters grapple with the question of whether the New Testament writers were mistaken in their interpretation?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Servant:** In the context of Isaiah, this refers to a figure who is chosen by God to perform a specific task, particularly to bring salvation and light to Israel and the nations.
- **Messianic Interpretation:** The understanding that certain Old Testament prophecies, particularly those about the servant, are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
- **Israel Interpretation:** The view that the "servant" in Isaiah represents the nation of Israel, particularly in its suffering and exile.
- **Targum of Jonathan:** An Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible, recognized as official by the Babylonian Talmud, which identifies the servant in Isaiah 52:13 as the Messiah.
- **Yaskil:** A Hebrew term meaning "to act wisely" or "to prosper," used in Isaiah 52:13 to describe the success of the servant.
- **Nazah:** A Hebrew word meaning "to sprinkle," used in Leviticus for ceremonial cleansing and in Isaiah 52:15 to describe the servant's work of purifying many nations.
- **Conjectural Emendation:** A proposed change to the text of the Bible based on scholarly speculation rather than manuscript evidence, often used to resolve perceived difficulties in the text.
- **Exaltation:** The state of being raised up, lifted up, or highly honored, often referring to the servant's ultimate triumph and glory after suffering.
- **Humiliation:** The state of being humbled, disgraced, or brought low, often referring to the servant's suffering and rejection.
- **Atonement:** The act of making amends for sin or wrongdoing, often associated with the servant's sacrifice and its power to cleanse and purify.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 17, Servant of the Lord Theme Continued, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided text:

1. In Isaiah 50:4-11, what two groups of people are addressed, and what is the message to each?

Isaiah 50:4-11 addresses two distinct groups. The first group (verse 10) consists of those who fear the Lord and obey His servant, even when they "walk in darkness and have no light." The message to them is to trust in the Lord and rely on God, even when the future is uncertain. The second group (verse 11) includes those who "kindle a fire" and "compass yourselves about with sparks," meaning those who try to live by their own devices and oppose the Lord. The message to them is that they will ultimately "lie down in sorrow" and face everlasting torment.

2. Why is Isaiah 52:13-53:12 considered a climactic passage in the Book of Isaiah, and what is significant about the word "servant" in this section?

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is considered the climactic passage because it presents the redemptive work of the servant in its fullest form. It is the last time the word "servant" is explicitly mentioned in the singular form in Isaiah. Afterward, the text refers to the "servants" of the Lord in the plural, focusing on those who follow the servant and the results of his work.

3. How does the text argue that the "servant" in Isaiah is distinct from the nation of Israel?

Several arguments are presented to distinguish the servant from Israel. In Isaiah 49:5-6, the servant is tasked with bringing Jacob (Israel) back to God, implying a distinction. Furthermore, in Isaiah 50:5, the servant declares, "I was not rebellious, neither turned backward," which could not accurately describe the history of the nation of Israel. The servant represents Israel but is distinct from the nation as a whole, tasked with bringing light to the Gentiles, a task impossible for sinning Israel to accomplish.

4. What are the differing interpretations of Isaiah 53 concerning the identity of the "suffering servant," and what is the traditional Jewish interpretation?

Traditionally, a dominant interpretation is that the "suffering nation" is the nation of Israel, but historically it has been accepted by many Jewish interpreters and is found in the Targum of Jonathan that the servant was the Messiah. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that Jewish scholars adopted the "Israel Interpretation."

5. How does Isaiah 52:13 describe the success of the servant?

Isaiah 52:13 announces the success of the servant. It states, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently," or "act wisely" and "prosper," indicating that the servant will carry out his work successfully. The verse continues with three verbs of exaltation: "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."

6. Explain the "so, so" structure in Isaiah 52:14 and its significance.

Isaiah 52:14 uses a "so, so" structure (kasher, ken). The verse is interpreted as follows: "As many were astounded at you, O Israel," (referring to Israel's suffering and exile) "so his visage was marred more than any man" (referring to the servant's humiliation), "so shall he sprinkle many nations" (referring to the result of his humiliation, which is the cleansing of many nations). This structure highlights the comparison between the humiliation of Israel and the servant, while also showing how the servant's humiliation leads to the purification of the nations.

7. What is the meaning of "sprinkle many nations" in Isaiah 52:15, and why is there debate about its translation?

"Sprinkle many nations" (nazah) refers to the ceremonial cleansing of nations through the servant's humiliation. The word "sprinkle" is used repeatedly in Leviticus for ceremonial cleansing. Some scholars suggest "startle many nations" because they conjecture the word doesn't make sense in the context.

8. According to MacRae's interpretation of Isaiah 53:4, what is the verse primarily referring to, and how does it relate to Matthew 8:16-17?

MacRae argues that Isaiah 53:4, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," refers primarily to Christ's healing ministry, not the atoning work of Christ. He relates it to Matthew 8:16-17, which states that Jesus' healing works fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy by taking "our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." MacRae emphasizes that it's talking about the healing ministry of Christ and that observers mistook Christ's death for divine displeasure rather than seeing it as atonement.