

Isaiah 52:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

Analysis

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. This verse introduces the fourth and climactic Servant Song (52:13-53:12), the Old Testament's most explicit prophecy of Christ's suffering and exaltation. "My servant" ('avdi, עַבְדִּי) identifies the Servant as God's chosen instrument. "Shall deal prudently" (yaskil, יִשְׁכִּיל) means act wisely or prosper—the Servant accomplishes His mission successfully through wisdom, not merely power.

The threefold ascent—"exalted" (yarum, יָרָם), "extolled" (venissa, וְנִשְׂאָה), "be very high" (vegavah me'od, וְגָבַהּ מְאֹד)—creates emphatic gradation depicting supreme elevation. Each term intensifies: lifted up, lifted higher, lifted to utmost height. This anticipates Philippians 2:9-11 where God "highly exalted" Christ and gave Him the name above every name. The promised exaltation creates tension with following verses (53:2-3) describing rejection and suffering, demonstrating the pattern: suffering precedes glory.

From a Reformed perspective, this verse establishes Christ's mission as God's ordained plan, not tragic accident. The Servant's prudent dealing shows divine wisdom in salvation's method—substitutionary atonement satisfies both justice and mercy. The ultimate exaltation guarantees the mission's success; the cross leads to crown. This grounds Christian hope—present humiliation yields future glory (Romans 8:17, 2 Timothy 2:12). The Servant's pattern becomes believers' path: faithful suffering precedes vindication.

Historical Context

The Servant Songs (Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12) progressively reveal the Servant's identity and mission. Jewish interpretation varied—some saw corporate Israel, others an individual. The Ethiopian eunuch's question (Acts 8:34) demonstrates first-century confusion about the Servant's identity. Philip's answer: Jesus (Acts 8:35).

The exaltation language parallels enthronement psalms (Psalm 2, 110) used for Davidic kings, connecting the Servant to messianic hope. Christ's ascension (Acts 1:9-11), session at God's right hand (Hebrews 1:3), and coming return (Revelation 19:11-16) fulfill this threefold exaltation. Church history shows debates over Christ's identity, but Isaiah 52:13-53:12 provided crucial Old Testament testimony to His divine mission, suffering, and ultimate triumph.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's exaltation after suffering encourage you during present trials?
2. What does the Servant's 'prudent dealing' teach about God's wisdom in salvation?
3. How should the certainty of final exaltation shape your faithfulness in present humiliation?

Interlinear Text

הֵן ה	יִשָּׁכּ יֵל	עֶבְדִּי	יָר וּם	וְנִשָּׂא א
H2009	shall deal prudently	Behold my servant	he shall be exalted	and extolled
	H7919	H5650	H7311	H5375
וְגָבִה	מְאֹד:			
high	and be very			
H1361	H3966			

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 28:18 (Parallel theme): And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Isaiah 42:1 (Parallel theme): Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

John 3:31 (Parallel theme): He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

Jeremiah 23:5 (Parallel theme): Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

Hebrews 1:3 (Parallel theme): Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Zechariah 3:8 (Parallel theme): Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.