

Isaiah 52:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So shall he sprinkle many nations; 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.

Analysis

So shall he sprinkle many nations; 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. The word "sprinkle" (yazzeh, יָצַח) typically refers to priestly sprinkling of blood or water for purification (Leviticus 16:14-15, Numbers 19:18). Some translations render this "startle" based on different Hebrew roots, but "sprinkle" fits Isaiah's sacrificial context (53:10—guilt offering). The Servant functions as priest, sprinkling His blood on "many nations"—not just Israel but Gentiles, achieving universal cleansing.

Kings shutting mouths indicates stunned silence before unexpected revelation. Their presumed authority and wisdom become mute before the Servant's work. What "had not been told" and "had not been heard" emphasizes that this revelation contradicts all human wisdom—the gospel's skandalon (scandal/stumbling block, 1 Corinthians 1:23). They "see" and "consider" what seemed impossible: a suffering servant who saves through death, exalted through humiliation.

From a Reformed perspective, this prophesies the gospel's global reach and its effect on proud humanity. Romans 15:21 quotes this verse, applying it to Paul's Gentile mission. The sprinkling speaks of Christ's blood applied to believers from every nation (Hebrews 9:13-14, 10:22, 1 Peter 1:2). Kings represent human wisdom and power, silenced before God's wisdom in the cross (1 Corinthians

1:18-25). The Servant's work accomplishes what no human religion or philosophy anticipated—salvation by grace through substitutionary suffering.

Historical Context

Sprinkling in Old Testament worship purified ceremonially unclean persons (Leviticus 14:7, 16:14-19, Numbers 19:13-21). The Day of Atonement ritual involved sprinkling blood on the mercy seat and altar. Hebrews 9:11-14, 19-22 explicitly connects these rituals to Christ's superior sacrifice that cleanses conscience, not merely ceremonial impurity.

The phrase "many nations" extends beyond ethnic Israel to Gentiles, fulfilled through apostolic missions. Acts 10 (Cornelius), Acts 13-28 (Paul's journeys), and church history demonstrate the gospel reaching emperors and slaves, philosophers and peasants across Rome, Africa, Asia, and beyond. The Reformation's sola gratia (grace alone) recovered this truth after medieval merit-theology obscured it. Kings throughout history—Constantine, Clovis, Alfred, Elizabeth I—have "shut their mouths" in submission to Christ, though earthly power means nothing before His authority.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How has the gospel shown you truths you 'had not heard' in your natural thinking?
2. What aspects of Christ's work still leave you in 'shut mouth' amazement?

3. How should the Servant sprinkling 'many nations' shape your view of global missions?

Interlinear Text

יְיָ	יִזְרֹא	גוֹיִם	רַבִּים	עַל	יִקְפֹּצוּ	מְלָכִים
H3651	So shall he sprinkle	nations	many	H5921	shall shut	the kings
	H5137	H1471	H7227		H7092	H4428
פִּיהֶם	כִּי	אֲשֶׁר	לֹא	סֵפֶר	לָהֶם	
their mouths	H3588	H834	H3808	at him for that which had not been told	H0	
				H5608		
וְרָאוּ	וְאֲשֶׁר	לֹא	שָׁמְעוּ			
them shall they see	H834	H3808	and that which they had not heard			
H7200			H8085			
הִתְבּוֹנְנוּ:						
shall they consider						
H995						

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 49:7 (Kingdom): Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

Hebrews 10:22 (Parallel theme): Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Isaiah 49:23 (Kingdom): And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Isaiah 55:5 (Parallel theme): Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Matthew 28:19 (Parallel theme): Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Ezekiel 36:25 (Parallel theme): Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

1 Peter 1:2 (Parallel theme): Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

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