

the LORD was abundantly displayed in bringing back God's people from exile (52:11-12). Here in Part 3 it is even more wonderfully active to deal with the problem of sin and to apply the results of Christ's atonement to all who will be saved.

Failure to recognize that kings, rather than prophets or actual observers, are the speakers in verse 1 has sometimes led to a complete misunderstanding of verse 2. This is particularly true of the phrases "he hath no form nor comeliness" and "no beauty that we should desire him" (KJV), which do not fit at all with the picture contained in the gospels. The character of Jesus was undoubtedly one of rare charm and attractiveness. Even the officers sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). Crowds followed Him, listening intently to His wonderful messages and wondering at the miracles He performed. It was only when it became clear that His message demanded complete and absolute allegiance that they began to fall away from Him. This verse pictures the impression the account first made on the leaders in distant nations, who expected that the answer to the problem of life might be given by a powerful Roman leader or by a great Athenian philosopher. To them, a Galilean peasant, living and dying in a little country on the very fringe of civilization, seemed like a frail plant, growing in a parched ground, altogether lacking the majesty and beauty that they would have expected to find.

In the early part of the verse, the words "before him" are important as recognizing that the Servant was always in the LORD's sight and that this seemingly frail plant derived its strength from God Himself. One who does not recognize the relation to the context might easily assume that the words "before him" are meaningless. Therefore some have suggested changing the text to read "before us"; others have gone so far as to propose breaking the word into two parts and then so altering one of them as to produce a phrase that would mean "not fair," or "not beautiful."

This paragraph has presented the reaction of leaders in distant lands. In the next, the viewpoint shifts to that of people who actually witnessed the life and death of the LORD's Servant.