

Previously Israel has been described as God's servant humiliated by its suffering and hence unable to perform the work of God. It has been taught that a Servant is to represent Israel in performing this great work, but there has been as yet only one brief suggestion, in Isaiah 50:4-6, that this Servant is to suffer.

Isaiah 52:14 is not translated particularly well in the King James Version. It seems clear that the translators missed the full meaning of the verse. Evidently they did not fully understand the teaching of the earlier chapters of the book, as to the difference between Israel (which is repeatedly addressed in the second person in the fifty-second chapter), and the Servant of the Lord, who is to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to be a light to the Gentiles. In this verse the second person is used of Israel and the third person is used of the Servant. "Just as many were astonished at thee, O Israel, because of the suffering through which thou hast gone, similarly His visage is to be so marred that He hardly seems human." The fact that this is the correct interpretation is demonstrated when we note that, in the Hebrew, the word "so" is at the very beginning of the second phrase. "As many were astonished at thee, so marred was His visage...."

We have thus seen the comparison between the humiliation of the Servant and the humiliation of Israel. Yet we recall that there is a vital difference between the two humiliations. The humiliation of Israel is a result of its sin and accomplishes no good purpose in itself. It is proof of Israel's inability to carry out the work assigned to her. The humiliation of the Servant is not due to any sin of His own, for He is without sin. He is the One who calmly and without haste proceeds to the accomplishment of His work. Yet He must undergo humiliation. Why must He do so? The following verse gives us the answer: "So shall he sprinkle many nations."

The word translated "sprinkle" here is the word which is used repeatedly in Leviticus for the ceremonial cleansing of the objects in the temple. Sometimes this was done with water and sometimes with blood. The purpose of the humiliation of the Servant is to cleanse many nations. It is to bring to them God's redeeming power and to free them from their sin. Thus right in the beginning of this passage its great