

Healed from a more hurtful wound  
A hermeneutic analysis of Isiah 53.5

Title

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Thesis: Isiah 53.5 has no base to be claimed as a divine healing text.

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## *Introduction*

The Bible is the word of God. This statement it is not made by human imagination or fanaticism, but is stated by the Bible itself and probed by historical events. The second letter of the Apostol Paul to Timothy says that all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3.16) Also the second letter of Peter says that the prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21) The Bible it is known for its prophetic content, and the fulfillment of its prophecies are evidence of the veracity of the text of the Scripture.

Among this prophets we found Isiah, also called the “Evangelistic Prophet” because his book referred more than any other about the future Messiah that Israel was waiting for. Isiah 53 it is a well know passage of the scripture were we found a reference to somebody that will be mock by his people, will suffered for them in order to bring them peace, rest and healing. Isiah 53:5 say the fallowing: *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.* This verse 5, which is the one this work will focus on, is used among Christian to claim divine healing but this is not the case with this passage of the scripture in its context. It does not mean that without this verse the doctrine of divine healing does not exist because there are many other promises and text that really proves that God stills heals today. This work is intended to explain why Isiah 53.5 is used incorrectly when we discuss about the doctrine of divine healing. There are at least three reason why: one, it context does not support it, the word used by the author not necessarily refers to physical healing, and third Jesus did a deeper healing, the healing of our souls from sin.

Why it is necessary to make this point clear? Besides the necessity to approach the Bible knowing the correct interpretation of its passages because this is the will of God, it is important also prepare the people of God in patient and endurance during the Christian walk. Many come to Christ with the expectation that their physical healing need will be resolve and it never happen, we as Christian leader teach them that way and at the end they struggle blaming Christ because they do not see the fulfillment of “*by his wounds we are healed.*” The physical healing should never constitute the driven cause to bring people to Jesus but a greater necessity, the need of being heal of our sin.

### *Historical Analysis*

The author of the book of Isiah is the prophet himself. The book was written around 740-680 before Christ. Basically, the prophet was called by God to warn Judah about the consequences of its apostasy. Apparently Juda was decided to follow the example of the apostasy of Samaria its northern sister. Isiah finishes his ministry during the kingdom of Manasseh; king that introduce the idolatry to the maximum potential, phenomenon at that time that expressed the profound apostasy of the nation. Because of that, God will judge them using Babylonian army and will cast them out of their land. Mixed with his declaration of imminent judgment, God is announcing the coming of the messiah, the Lord is refreshing and giving hope to his remnant with the expectation of the appearance in the scene their savior. All this can be understand reading Isiah chapter 49 to 57. Isiah is showing someone who is going to cleans Israel from its inequities and through suffering. The prophet is making evident that what worries God the most in this case is not necessarily their sickness but the condition of their hearts towards him.

[ CITATION Hol12 \l 1033 ]

### *Contextual Analysis*

The text of Isaiah 53 is a controversial passage since there are two general interpretations. Jewish people proclaim that the text is referring to them as a nation, their sufferings and civic and religious resurrection. For the other hand, evangelicals declare that the passage is referring to a single person and not to the nation of Israel as Jewish teachers say. The prophets' words are spoken to the people of Israel with the purpose to make relevant the type of ministry and the suffering of the Messiah. Verse 3 says: *He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.* (NIV) The statement *we held him in low esteem*, clearly says that the text is referring to a man that will suffer and he won't be taken in consideration by his own people. [ CITATION Ger07 \l 1033 ]

### *Etymology Study of the Word "Raphap"*

The word healed is translated in the passage from the Hebrew word "*raphap*". According with the dictionary it means: properly to mend (by stitching), that is, (figuratively) to cure: - cure, (cause to) heal, physician, repair, X thoroughly, make whole. The word is used 68 times in the New King James Version. The verb רָפָא (rapa') means to heal or make healthy. It occurs in all expectable ways, from the healing of an infirm person (Jeremiah 17:14) to the restoration of a nation (Isaiah 6:10, Hosea 6:1), and from sickness (Deuteronomy 28:27) to wounds (2 Kings 8:29) to faithlessness (Jeremiah 3:22). That the fundamental meaning of this verb is to restore, namely to a previously enjoyed state of proper functioning is shown in 1 Kings 18:30, where Isaiah "heals" (i.e. repairs) the altar of the Lord. And in 2 Kings 2:21 the prophet Elisha "heals" (i.e. purifies) a spring that had gone bad.

In Genesis 20.17 say: *So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed (H7495) Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bear children.* This a case where the same word is used by the author with the meaning of restoring to normal an ill body. For the other hand, in 1 King 18.30 when it says And Elijah said unto all the people, come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired H7495 the altar of the LORD that was broken down. The use given to the word is a repairing meaning. At this point we can conclude that the word translated as heal does not have the consistence to the meaning of physical healing.

The context of the passage does not support the physical healing meaning. The chapter is presenting somebody that is willing to die for the good of many others, “*He was wounded for our transgressions*”. Christ bore our sins, and so bore our griefs, bore them off us, that we should never be pressed above measure. This is quoted (Matthew 8:17) with application to the compassion Christ had for the sick that came to him to be cured and the power he put forth to cure them. He did this by suffering for our sins. [ CITATION Mat97 \l 1033 ]

Jesus did a deeper healing, the healing of our souls from sin. Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes (that is, the sufferings he underwent) he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls, and to put our souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God and prepared to enjoy him. [ CITATION Mat97 \l 1033 ] Jesus at the cross did not buy physical healing for all but surely he guaranteed a renew spirit and a transformed mind to serve and worship God. Jesus brought in the cross a more meaningful motive to worship him, our redemption.

Another extra argument that will confirm the misuse of the passage as a text to claim divine healing is the reality that the whole body of Christ did not receive a physical healing when they repented and came to Jesus Christ, but in many cases horrible physical wounds are brought to our lives when we decided to serve Jesus not matter the consequences. Many of us are bearing physical defects and sickness that still with us today. What we claim is that the author is using the word “*raphap*” with more deep meaning than the mere physical healing, but the healing that the blood of Jesus produces in our souls infected by the sin.

#### *Contemporary Application*

The text is applicable with the purpose of making clear that God is extremely worried about our sinful condition, and hates the corruptive sickness by which our soul is infected. Isaiah is telling us that the sacrifice of the Messiah will heal the sins of the humanity. In other words, the sacrifice of Christ restores the broken relationship with the heavenly Father, cleanses our wounds and seals the fissure done by the sin. Our body decays, and the Bible confirmed it, but our spirit is restored continuously.

Brothers and sisters in Christ in our churches are discouraged believers because God has not fulfilled Isaiah 53:5 as a physical healing promise. He will fulfill other healing promises in the Bible, but this specific one has been fulfilled by his Son in the Calvary. He healed you and me, and we are not infected any more by the illness of sin. The great day is near when as children of God will be transformed as the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:51–54: “*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with*

*immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”* So we are persuaded by greater things. But do not forget that God is the almighty God that can heal you physically too. Jesus told us in Mark 16.18 *“they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”*

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