

IS HEALING IN THE ATONEMENT?

Is healing in the atonement? Answer: All of the benefits of the atonement are not immediately realized. Total healing awaits GLORIFICATION.

*Bodily redemption is yet future (cf. Rom. 8:18, 22-23; 1 Cor. 15; Eph. 4:30).

*Our bodies are still susceptible to sickness and disease (cf. 1 Tim. 5:23).

*The curse is still upon creation (cf. labor pains) (cf. Gen. 3; Rev. 22:3).

*Our bodies still have the sentence of death in them (cf. Rom. 8; Heb. 9:27).

*We don't have glorified bodies yet at this point (cf. 1 Cor. 15:53; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:1-2).

*What will be former (sickness, pain, death) is still yet present (cf. Rev. 21:4).

Note the following examples:

1. Elisha got sick and died (cf. 2 Kgs. 13:14-21).
2. God worked through prayer and medicine in Isaiah 38:21.
3. Paul had physical infirmities (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16).
4. Epaphroditus got sick in the service of Christ (cf. Phil. 2:26-30).
5. Godly Timothy was consistently "sick" (cf. 1 Tim. 5:23).
6. Trophimus got sick while working with Paul (cf. 2 Tim. 4:20).
7. John made a distinction between physical and spiritual health (cf. 3 Jn. 2).
8. The good Samaritan was commended for using medicine (cf. Lk. 10:30-37).
9. Christ recognized a place for doctors (cf. Mt. 9:12; Col. 4:14).
10. Paul and Doctor Luke worked closely together (cf. Acts 28:7-9; Col. 4:14).

WHAT ABOUT ISAIAH 53?

Isaiah 53:4 (NKJV)

4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

In the phrase "***Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows***" the Hebrew word (*nasa*) translated as "***borne***" literally means "*to lift or take up*". It connotes the idea of carrying. Thus, the passage emphasizes that

Christ, Who was Himself sinless, is the SIN-BEARER Who carries the weight of our sin. He bears the punishment that we deserve. He carried the HEAVY weight of our sins punishment. Truly He alone did the HEAVY lifting! Jesus ALONE died on the cross! Jesus ALONE is Savior!

The word “**griefs**” refers to external afflictions. As in verse 3 the word “**griefs**” is literally “**sicknesses**” or “**diseases**”. The word “**sorrows**” refers to internal afflictions. It refers to the anguish that accompanies sin. In view is the comprehensive consequences of sin both external and internal. In view is human frailty and brokenness as a result of the fall.

Isaiah 53:4 is quoted in the NT in reference to Christ’s healing ministry.

Matthew 8:16–17 (NKJV)

16 When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.”

So, the healing ministry of Christ was certainly a partial fulfillment of this prophecy. However, most believe that the healings of Christ in His incarnation as referenced in Matt. 8:16-17 anticipated a greater healing reality in the kingdom based on His work on the cross. As such, there is a partial fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4 in Christ’s healing ministry at His first coming, but an ultimately even greater comprehensive fulfillment will be realized in relation to the coming kingdom and the eternal state.

So there is a physical emphasis here, but more importantly there is a spiritual emphasis. Many believe that Peter may well have in mind Isaiah 53:4 when he says of Christ in 1 Peter 2:24, “**who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree**”. Both passages emphasize the idea of “bore” or the carrying of sin and its effects.

The word “**borne**” (*nasa*) in Isaiah 53:4 is commonly used in Leviticus in connection with bearing the guilt of sin, thus giving further weight to the idea that what is ultimately in view is more than just physical healing during Christ’s earthly ministry (cf. Lev. 5:1, 17; 16:22; 20:19, 20).

In addition, the language here in Isaiah 53:4 reflects the sin-sick state of Israel as brought out in Isaiah 1:5-6. There it is said, “**the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it**”. Thus, sin-sickness is being

described. The answer to this is, first and foremost, spiritual healing as found ultimately in Jesus.

The entire chapter of Isaiah 53 puts the overall emphasis on spiritual healing out of which ultimately comes physical healing in the kingdom.

Isaiah 53 – Emphasis on Sin/Spiritual Healing

- v. 5 transgressions
- v. 5 iniquities
- v. 6 iniquity
- v. 8 transgressions
- v. 9 wicked
- v. 10 sin
- v. 11 iniquities
- v. 12 transgressors
- v. 12 sin
- v. 12 transgressors

Some people, based on the language of Isaiah 53:4-5 believe that physical healing is in the atonement of Christ's cross work, and therefore if people just have "faith" they will not be sick. Suffice it to say that I think Isaiah 53:4 is a comprehensive statement regarding ultimate healing of which Christ's earthly healing ministry was a foretaste (cf. Heb. 6:5). This ultimate healing ministry is based on the cross and will know complete fulfillment only in the eternal kingdom.

Isaiah 53:5 (NKJV)

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

But is a contrast word. Whereas Israel previously saw Christ stricken, smitten, and afflicted for His own sin; in conversion they will come to see that He was "**wounded for our transgressions**".

This verse is filled with the idea of "penal substitution", that is that Christ in our place as our substitute paid our sin penalty.

The word "**wounded**" (Heb. *mekholal*) is more literally "**pierced through**". It connotes being wounded to death or pierced fatally. It denotes a violent and painful death (cf. Deut. 21:1; Isa. 51:9).

Jesus was wounded/pierced...

His **head** pierced by thorns – (Jn. 19:2)
His **back** pierced by scourging – (Jn. 19:1)
His **hands** pierced by nails – (Lk. 24:39-40)
His **side** pierced by a spear – (Jn. 19:34)
His **feet** pierced by nails - (Lk. 24:39-40)

The amazing thing is that piercing very accurately depicts crucifixion and yet in Isaiah's time no one in Israel was being crucified. They could potentially be stoned or hanged, - but no crucifixion. The Romans adopted this practice of crucifixion hundreds of years later. Amazingly, 700 years before it happened Isaiah very specifically depicted that the Messiah would die by piercing/crucifixion and it was fulfilled to the letter.

This was the precise fulfillment of prophecy.

Psalm 22:16 (NKJV)

16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. **They pierced My hands and My feet;**

Zechariah 12:10 (NKJV)

10 “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; **then they will look on Me whom they pierced.** Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

Revelation 1:7 (NKJV)

7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, **even they who pierced Him.** And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

And the reason He was pierced was for “**our transgressions**”.

Transgressions denotes rebellious violations of God's law. Transgression dares to step across the line of God's law. It is an affront to God's sovereign authority and dares to defy Him. In conversion, Israel will say, “**He was bruised for our iniquities.**” Bruised (Heb. *daka*) is more literally “**crushed**” in the sense of being crushed to death.

Iniquities are “**perversions**”. It is that which is spiritually twisted and out of order. It is out of line with God. Iniquity is spiritual crookedness.

Piercing and crushing are both appropriate descriptions of crucifixion – the first being used literally, and the second figuratively. Commonly “bruised” (crushed) is used in a metaphorical way. For example, Isaiah

57:15 speaks of a “contrite” (crushed) spirit and Psalm 51:17 speaks of a “contrite” (crushed) heart. The idea is that which is utterly broken or shattered.

The penalty for our sin was a fatal piercing and spiritual crushing that is beyond what we can comprehend. Penitent Israel will finally come to realize it was for their transgressions and iniquities that Jesus died, and not for His own.

Note the emphasis on substitution here. He was wounded for “**our**” transgressions, He was bruised for “**our**” iniquities. Christ died in **our** place! As Paul says in Rom. 5:8 “**Christ died for us**”, and again in 1 Corinthians 15:3, “**Christ died for our sins**” – and that according to the OT Scriptures. This expresses the substitutionary (vicarious) nature of Christ’s death as the innocent died for the guilty. This was a fulfillment of the entire sacrificial system in the OT which constantly depicted substitution of the innocent for the guilty. This is what John the Baptist meant when he introduced Jesus as “**The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**” (Jn. 1:29)

This being pierced and crushed for our sin is exactly what the NT shows was fulfilled in Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The chastisement of our peace was upon Him,

Chastisement means “punishment”. As our substitute Christ took our punishment – He took the punishment for sin that we deserve. This is the idea of **GRACE** which is the pure unmerited favor of God.

When the Bible says you are saved by **GRACE** you could insert the word **CROSS** there. In Galatians 2:21 Paul equates “**the grace of God**” with the death of Christ. We preach the gospel of God’s grace which is that Christ died for our sins (Acts 20:24).

Christ took our punishment for sin so that we might know peace with God (cf. Rom. 5:1). The word peace is shalom which denotes well-being or wholeness. Christ’s death makes spiritual wholeness possible (cf. Col. 1:20).

And by His stripes we are healed.

His stripes refer to His scourging. Healed is the idea of being made well.

Because of the emphasis in verse 4 on our physical **griefs** (lit. “sicknesses”) being carried by Christ, and because of the words “**we are healed**” in verse 5 some have argued that healing is therefore in the atonement and there is no reason for a believer to ever be sick. After all, they argue, provision has been made for our healing in the death of Christ.

Is healing in the atonement? Well, yes it is! But provision was also made for the kingdom in the atonement and we are not yet in the kingdom. Glorification was also secured in the atonement and yet we have not yet experienced this. The answer is that while total healing is provided for in the atonement, all the benefits of the atonement are not immediately realized. Total healing awaits glorification in the kingdom!

As Isaiah often does, he states this in what is called “**the prophetic perfect**” tense. In other words, it is so certain to come to pass that he states it as already having been accomplished.

Again, the main emphasis throughout Isaiah 53 is on “**spiritual healing**”. First and foremost Christ died for our sins, but out of that eventually comes the full healing of glorification and a glorified body. But this is yet future. In the meantime, we still live in broken bodies that are breaking down. As Paul says, “**our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed**” (2 Cor. 4:16).

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for **the former things** have passed away.”

In glory that which will be “former” (sickness, pain, death) is today still a present reality. But praise God provision has been made for our total healing in the resurrection and one day it will be a completed reality. Yes, God can and does heal in answer to prayer according to His perfect will. But we are not living in the age of signs and wonders and perfect health awaits the kingdom. In the meantime, as Paul says, “*even we ourselves groan within ourselves*” eagerly waiting for the redemption of our body (cf. Rom. 8:23).

It is important to note that Peter in the NT in 1 Peter 2:24 applies “**by whose stripes you were healed**” to spiritual healing as seen the parallel emphasis within the verse.

1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV)

24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

In the immediate context of Isaiah the overwhelming emphasis is on Christ dealing with our sin problem (cf. Isa. 53:6).