

Vicarious Sacrifice: Isaiah's Inquiry: The Rhetorical Question: Isa 53:1a: Hiphil Causative Active of 'aman, "Who has been caused to believe our message?" Quoted in John 12:38, Solicits Common & Efficacious Grace; the Military Metaphor: Isa 53:1b: the noun *zeroa*, "The arm of the Lord," Describes the "work" of the Lord on the cross; the Work is "Revealed" by the Levitical Offerings: the Niphal Passive Perfect of *ghala*

II. Isaiah's Inquiry

B. Isaiah 53:1

1. The Rhetorical Question

Isaiah 53:1a - Who has believed our message?

1. The verb "believed" is the Hiphil causative active of אָמַן ('aman): "Who has been caused to believe our message?"
2. This interrogative is used twice in the New Testament: John 12:38 and Romans 10:16.
3. The message is the gospel and belief occurs by expressing personal faith in the content of the message.
4. The volition of a spiritually dead person cannot comprehend the gospel but he can focus his attention on its presentation.

Isaiah 53:1a - Who has been caused to believe our message?

5. Under "common grace," the Holy Spirit acts as a human spirit so as to make the gospel message comprehensible to the spiritually dead person.
6. Upon understanding the gospel message, the spiritually dead person has the option of disbelieving the gospel or believing it.
7. If the latter, then his faith alone in Christ alone is taken by the Holy Spirit and made effective for salvation. This is referred to as "efficacious grace."
8. Isaiah opens his Chapter 53 with a rhetorical question, "Who has believed (efficacious grace) our message?"
9. What follows in the next eleven and one-half verses is a presentation of all the information an Israelite needs to hear to make the most important of all decisions.
10. Historically, the overwhelming majority of the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have used their free will to express a negative response to the message.

11. Yet, Isaiah 53 is so powerful in identifying Jesus as the Messiah that the rabbis refuse to teach it and many forbid their members to read it.

2. The Military Metaphor

Isaiah 53:1b - And to whom has the arm [or work] of the Lord been revealed?

1. The “arm of the Lord” is an idiom referring to work. During the three hours of judgment, the Lord worked for our salvation.
2. His duty was to willingly receive the imputation of our sins followed by being judged for them. It was His duty to concentrate on the task while avoiding any form of personal sin.
3. This work performed by our Lord resulted in salvation being made available to the entire human race and communicated through presentations of the gospel.
4. The word for “arm” is the noun זְרוֹעַ (zeroa’).
5. The metaphorical use of zeroa’ is important to note here:

The metaphorical use of zeroa’ appears to derive initially from the warrior’s use of his arms, in which his strength resides. Thus the human arm means military power. (p. 133)

The expression “arm of Yahweh” [see “arm of the Lord” in Isaiah 53:1] is used most frequently to represent his warlike power.¹ (p. 139)

6. In Isaiah’s military metaphor, the application of the word “arm” is assigned to the work of Jesus on the cross, clearly the ultimate battle in the Invisible War during which the eternal future of the human race is at stake.
7. Isaiah inquires, “To whom has the work of the Lord been revealed?”
8. The verb “revealed” is the Niphal passive perfect of גָּלָה (ghala): “to reveal, uncover, to expose.”
9. Answer: The Israelites through the presentation of the annual set of rituals that reveals, uncovers, and exposes to the mind the reality of Messiah.

¹ F. J. Helfmeyer, “זְרוֹעַ,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 4:133, 139.