

ISAIAH: Prophecies of Messiah
THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Thursday, August 13

Reading: Isaiah 52-53

Isaiah 53:4 *Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.*

For Christians, Isaiah 53 is a bedrock prophecy of the atoning death of Christ. The passage actually begins back in 52:13-15. There “My Servant” is described as being marred and disfigured. Chapter 53 then describes His humble origins and appearance (53:1-2). He is a Man despised and rejected. He is pierced and crushed, not for His own crimes but for ours. He is oppressed, afflicted, and cut off from the land of the living (53:3-9).

Unbelieving Jewish rabbis teach that this chapter refers to the nation of Israel and their suffering. But if this is true, who is the “our” for which Israel is suffering? Who are the sheep that have gone astray for whom Israel has taken “the iniquity of us all”? How has Israel been stricken “for the transgressions of My people”? More likely, Israel is the one who despised and struck “My Servant.” While the debate between Jews and Christians still rages, many Jews have come to faith through understanding that the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 is Jesus Christ.

Isaiah tells us that it was “the Lord’s will to crush Him” to “make His life a guilt offering” (53:10). The cross was not the result of some failed plan as many through the centuries have suggested. It was the plan of God from eternity past (1 Peter 1:18-20). Isaiah 53:10-12 lead us to God’s grace. God’s justice and holiness demanded a penalty for sin. But in grace, God the Son stepped into our world and paid that penalty. And God was satisfied! The Father’s acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice was confirmed by Jesus’ resurrection.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. Sprinkling was associated with being cleansed under the Mosaic Law. The priests, the Tabernacle, and everything used therein were sprinkled with blood. That “My Servant” would “sprinkle many nations” (52:15) means that Christ’s blood would provide cleansing for all who receive Him. This emphasis is continued in 53:4-6. Have you been cleansed by the blood of Christ?
2. The 2004 movie “The Passion of the Christ” woke many people up to the suffering Jesus endured on our behalf. While the movie was often difficult to watch, the actual crucifixion was probably much worse. But we would be wrong to only focus on the physical suffering of Christ. The spiritual suffering of the sinless Son of God bearing all our sins must have been much more terrible for Christ. He literally bore the hell that we deserved! Have you thanked Him for the price He paid for you?
3. How often do we take the cross of Christ for granted? How often have we minimized the price Jesus paid for our salvation by the way we live our lives?

1 Peter 2:24-25 He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.