

The Silent Servant, Part 2

Isaiah 53:7-9

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It's Isaiah 53, and I may have to start apologizing for the fact that we are prolonging this so much. But if you only knew how much there was for me to say that I do not say because time constrains me. I have lived this chapter now for months, leading up to the series and in the midst of the series. And there are so many trails that come out of this; there are so many things that originate in Isaiah 53 that become trails and tracks that one could follow almost endlessly. I have said to you that this is a bottomless chapter, that I can't find the depth, I can't find the breadth, I can't find the height of it. I was reading one book this week on Isaiah 53 in which the writer said, "Words collapse under the weight of this chapter."

And I understand that, that there just aren't words to hold it up; it's too vast, too massive to be carried by vocabulary. This is a chapter that, in a sense, you get to the point where you feel the weight of it without being able to articulate it. And, of course, that's always the preacher's problem and most particularly my problem since I am limited in my ability to express myself. And I find myself to some degree frustrated and at the same time trying to relieve that frustration by going back over it and enriching things that we've already talked about just so I don't leave anything unsaid that should be said.

This is a weighty portion of Scripture. There may be nothing like it, at least in my mind, in all of Holy Scripture. So full, so dense and such a clear detailed presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ in His life, in His death, in His burial, in His resurrection, in His exaltation and in His intercession that it transcends any passage in the Old Testament. The complexity of this chapter is stunning and staggering. The text, starting in chapter 52, verse 13, begins on a journey that has no parallel in Scripture.

It begins with the Lord's eternal relationship to the Messiah, to His Son, and then it points to the exalted glory at the end when the Son has fully accomplished His redemptive work. And in between, it takes us down into the humiliation of our Sin-bearer, through the events of His life, through the events of Holy Week, the cross, the resurrection, out the empty tomb, up to the glories of heaven and into His ongoing intercessory work. It is the full history of the Messiah that is touched on here with a stunning, stunning amount of detail that is overwhelming when you consider that it's all written by the pen of a prophet inspired by God 700 years before Christ arrived.

There is not only the work of Christ presented here, as I said, from His life, the point of His incarnation to His intercession and everything in between, but there is even the nature of the Messiah presented, the nature of the Servant. And for that I want you to go back to the very beginning of this text, chapter 52, verse 13, at chapter 42, verse 13. I'll be circling back as we go through this because I can't give everything to you as we move along. But going back to where we started, God speaks at the beginning and end of this marvelous section. God is the speaker in

chapter 52, verses 13 to 15, and God is the speaker at the end in the second half of verse 11 and the final verse, 12.

So God introduces His Servant and concludes this account of His Servant. And as God introduces Him, He identifies His nature here in the opening verse, "Behold My Servant." That is the title that Messiah bears, and there are many references to Him as the Servant of the Lord in this section of Isaiah. There are four Servant chapters about Him as the *ebed*, Yahweh, the Slave of God, chapter 42, chapter 49, chapter 50, and now this section here. They look at the Messiah as the Servant of the Lord.

In earlier portions of Isaiah, Israel is identified as the servant of the Lord, being an unfaithful servant for certain and thus the pronouncement of judgment upon them. But in the future, the Lord will have a Servant who is faithful, none other than the Messiah. And in the opening verse, His nature, or His person, is identified. He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Three verbs. Three verbs that speak of Him: high, lifted up, and greatly exalted. That introduces us to His eternal relationship with God the Father because those three verbs appear only one other place in the book of Isaiah, and that is in the sixth chapter of Isaiah and those same three verbs appear there to describe God high and lifted up who is holy, holy, holy, in the vision of Isaiah. So in chapter 6 those verbs are used to describe God the Father.

Here they are used to describe the Servant of God, the Slave of God, the Messiah, and, therefore, they introduce us to the Messiah as one who bears the same exaltation, the same lifting up, the same height as God Himself. And this is to say to us that that which is said of God can also be said of the Servant of the Lord. A combination of verbs that describes the Lord Yahweh Himself also describes the Servant of Yahweh.

That is to say what Paul said, "That in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." That is to say with the writer of Hebrews says, that "He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His person." That is to say what Jesus said, "If you've seen Me, you have seen the Father. I and the Father are one." And thus the Servant is identified in the opening verse by God Himself as one who is equal to Himself, also high, lifted up and greatly exalted. We're talking then about God incarnate. The Servant of God is none other than the incarnate Son of God. The Son of God is exalted there in that opening verse.

And then immediately, in verse 14, we see that God introduces Him as one who will, though exalted and God in nature, will be humiliated, verse 13 and 14. The transition is really amazing. Many were astonished at Israel, but they will be even more astonished when they see the appearance of the God/Man marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men. This is the humiliation that we know from the words of Paul in Philippians 2, that "He took upon Him the form of a slave, made in the likeness of man, humbled Himself unto death, even the death on the cross." The horrors of His treatment leading up to and including His crucifixion are the marring that the Father God reveals to Isaiah will take place.

When that is over, verse 15 says, then He will startle many nations...and now we're looking at His Second Coming when He returns after His death and resurrection...kings will shut their mouths on account of Him because they will see when He returns things they've never seen and hear things they've never heard. So as God introduces His Servant, He introduces Him as God, as being humiliated, and as being exalted. The one word in verse 13, "prosper," is God's affirmation that He

will succeed.

When God closes this chapter, He speaks again in the middle of verse 11, and He says this. “By His knowledge, the Righteous One, My Servant – ” Here is God again speaking about My Servant, His Son, the Messiah – “He will justify many, bear their iniquities, therefore I will allot Him a portion with the great. He will divide the booty with the strong because He poured out Himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors yet He Himself bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors.” God opens this section, in verses 13 to 15, by predicting and promising the triumph of the Messiah, the Servant. God concludes it by proclaiming that He has triumphed. He will and He has.

So God brackets this with an introduction and a conclusion. And in the middle you have verses 1 through 11a, and that is the delineation of the suffering of the Servant by which He is exalted. He will be exalted. He will be triumphant because He humbled Himself even to death, even death on a cross. The middle then is the reason for the exaltation. Because He did what the Father determined He would, the Father raised Him and seated Him at His right hand and gave Him a name above every name, which is the name Lord, and will one day send Him back to establish His Kingdom, the Kingdom which will shock and stun and startle the rulers of the world and bring about the Kingdom with all its glories. And then He will divide the spoil. He will be the final and only conqueror and monarch of the universe.

So you have commentary of introduction and affirmation of conclusion by God Himself. And in the middle, verses 1 to 11, is this amazing look at the reason why the Servant was to be so exalted. And the reason is given by God in verse 12. Why? Because He poured out Himself to death because He bore the sin of many. It is because of His work of humiliation and vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice that God will exalt Him. And that’s exactly what Paul says in Philippians 2, “He humbled Himself to death, therefore God highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name.” Paul is riding on the back of Isaiah 53 in that kenosis section of Philippians 2.

Now it’s very important and wonderful that God gives us an introductory prophecy and a concluding proclamation...it will happen, it has happened...because the middle is so tragic, so tragic. There would be little, perhaps little, hope if there were not this divine affirmation of the final victory of Christ. What we have in the introduction and the conclusion is the promise of His Second Coming. What we have in the middle is the work of His first coming, see that? What we have in the introduction and the conclusion is God’s declaration of His Second Coming as the reigning monarch, the King of kings and Lord of lords. What we have in the middle is His first coming and His humiliation. He comes again to reign because He came once to die. And that is the economy of God in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is exactly the middle section, His humiliation, that is the reason God has highly exalted Him. He came, He gave Himself fully to the will of God to save sinners from hell, and to do it in a most stunning and a most astonishing way by dying Himself the shameful, painful death of the wicked, the very kind of death that was reserved for the worst of criminals and slaves. But He came as the Righteous One, as He is identified in verse 11, to take the punishment of God for the unrighteous, to make them righteous. That’s the heart of the cross and the heart of the gospel.

Now we’re looking at verses 1 through 11a and we’re looking at this Servant. In verses 1 to 3, He is the scorned Servant, and we’ve looked at that. And then in verses 4 to 6, He is the substituted

Servant. And then in verses 7 to 9, where we are, He is the silent and slaughtered Servant. Now just a little bit of a reminder, a recap on something to be remembered, all right? The primary purpose of this passage is not to look at the cross; that's a secondary purpose. The primary purpose of this passage is to look at the final triumph of the Messiah, the Servant, the final triumph of the Messiah, the Servant.

The final triumph of the Messiah, the Servant, will be the salvation of His people. And that is what it says in verse 8. "He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people, My people." Or verse 11, "He will justify the many." Or verse 12, "He bore the sin of many." The point of this chapter is God will save His people. And, in particular, His people Israel. This is a prophecy of the future salvation of Israel. That's what the whole section of Isaiah is about, salvation for Israel in the future.

Zechariah says it's the time when they look on Him whom they've pierced and mourn for Him as an only Son. When they look back in history, which they haven't done yet, but they one day will, and they look at the One they pierced and realize that He was the Son of God, and they completely will understand what they have not as yet understood except for a remnant of Jews who have come to faith in Christ. Israel will be saved. The promise of Ezekiel 36, the New Covenant promise that God will save them, that God will forgive them, that God will write His law in their hearts, that God will take out a stony heart and give them a heart of flesh and plant His Spirit within them. Repeated in Jeremiah 31, repeated in Zechariah 12 and 13, the Spirit of grace and supplication comes on them. That will happen in the future, the salvation of the nation Israel. Or Romans 11, "All Israel will be saved."

When they are in the future, they will make the confession of verses 1 through 11. This will be their confession. It is currently, it is now...and for all who believe, Jew or Gentile...our confession, is it not? We understand that He was pierced for our transgressions. We understand that He was crushed for our iniquities, that the chastening or the punishment for our peace with God fell on Him, and the scourging that came on Him healed us. We understand that we're sheep who have gone astray, wicked by nature, and the Lord caused our iniquity to fall on Him. We understand that. That's an understanding of the gospel, that He died in our place, under divine punishment for us and that He being punished in our place, we will never be condemned. The punishment has been exacted on the substitute. We understand that. All believers understand that. You can't be saved without embracing that.

But one day in the future, the nation Israel will realize this and look back and confess the very words, the very confession of Isaiah, chapter 53. Now from the beginning, it says in verse 1, they didn't believe. "Who has believed the message given to us?" is what the Hebrew indicates. "Who among us believed that Jesus was the arm of the Lord revealed?" That's simply an expression to refer to the presence of God in power. "Who believed that He was the real power of God? Who believed that He was the Messiah, the Savior?" Very, very, very few, very few. Five hundred in Galilee, 120 in the Upper Room in Jerusalem after a three-year ministry across the nation of Israel, very few. Why? He didn't fit our model.

The Jews have always had a theology of glory but not a theology of suffering. They've always understood the glory of Messiah but not the suffering of Messiah. In fact, as far as I can tell, no indication is found anywhere in historic Jewish literature that they believed the Messiah would die for their sins. You cannot find it. They had no theology of a suffering, dying Messiah, only of a glorious

Messiah. So when they looked at Jesus, they didn't see a glorious Messiah. They saw a sucker branch; they saw a dirty root on a parched ground. They saw nothing stately, nothing majestic, nothing attractive about Him. He didn't fit their theology of glory.

And besides, not only was He coming from nowhere in His origin, not only was His appearance unimpressive, but at the end of His life, He was despised, forsaken, sorrowful, grieving. He was the kind of person we would hide our face from, He was that despicable. He was despised and we didn't esteem Him. He was a scorned Messiah. They said about Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us, crucify Him, crucify Him, He is not our King," the scorned Messiah. Verses 4 to 6, He is the substituted Messiah.

Some day in the future they're going to look back and say, "Now we see it differently. It was our griefs He bore. It was our sorrows He carried. We thought He was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted for His own sins, for His own blasphemies because He was a blasphemer, because He was an interloper, because He was an intruder. Oh how wrong we were. Now we know, He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities," and so forth. The Lord caused our iniquity to fall on Him.

Then it gets us to verses 7 to 9. He is the scorned and He is the substituted Servant. And here, He is the silent and slaughtered Servant. And I started last week, two weeks ago now, with the phrase "Like a lamb that is led to slaughter." That's the high point of this prophecy. He will come as a lamb to be slaughtered. When Jesus first appeared at the Jordan River to begin His ministry and John the Baptist, His forerunner, saw Him face-to-face, John 1:29, John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He understood it. The apostle Peter understood it. Writing in his first chapter of his first epistle says, "We were redeemed not with perishable things like gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish and without spot."

They understood that the Messiah was coming to be the sacrifice for sin, to which all other sacrifices pointed. There was no sacrifice of an animal, either a sheep, or a goat, or a bull. There was no animal sacrifice that could take away sin. Hebrews 10, "The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin." But the same chapter says, "By one offering that He gave Himself, He sanctified forever those that belong to Him." Peter understood it.

Paul understood it. Paul, a Jew, in Philippians 3, thinks he's on the right track until he sees Christ and then everything that he had hoped in becomes despicable to him, rubbish, garbage, that he may win Christ and have a righteousness not his own but that which is the righteousness of God granted him by faith in Christ. Paul understood it. Peter understood it. The disciples understood it. The early church understood it. Every believer through history has understood that Jesus died as the one sacrifice for sin that satisfied God, the Lamb of God who actually takes away sin.

Hebrews 9 says that the animal sacrifices can't take away sin. Hebrews 10 repeats it; they can't take away sin. They simply point to the need for a substitute to be able to do that. And Christ is that chosen Lamb. The day He came into Jerusalem was the day that people selected their lambs for sacrifice on the weekend at the Passover. And the day He came into Jerusalem God selected Him as His Lamb and offered Him up at the end of the week to take away sin. That's why Paul in 1 Corinthians says, "Jesus Christ is our Passover." "Jesus Christ is our Passover."

There's an interesting statement tucked in to Psalm 49 where God says, "No man can by any means redeem his brother. No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of his soul is costly and he should cease trying forever." Great statement. You can't redeem someone else. No human can redeem another human. You can't redeem yourself, you can't redeem anyone else. Only the God/Man Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb, can pay the costly price. The costly price, not perishable, not gold or silver.

There were times in Israel's history, such as Exodus 30, when they numbered the men because they were going to trust in their might and trust in their numbers and trust in their power rather than trusting God against their enemies, and God punished them and God brought judgment on them for doing that. God also said to them there is a way that you can be redeemed from that punishment through gold or silver, Exodus chapter 30, temporal redemption. But, no amount of money could ever redeem a soul because the cost is too high, too high. Isaiah got it. Isaiah 52:3; Isaiah said, "Thus says the Lord, you were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money."

There are no commodities in this world that can be used to redeem you. Only as Peter said, "The precious blood of a lamb unblemished and spotless who is none other than Christ. His death becomes the redeeming sacrifice." And Peter in that same passage, 1 Peter 1:20 and 21, says, "Through Him you are believers in God." You have entered into a relationship of faith with God through Him. Well, this is the view of death with regard to Jesus Christ that one must hold to be saved. The Jews today don't believe it. They reject Jesus Christ. They still believe that He was stricken, smitten and afflicted by God for being a blasphemer. You and I know better. We believe the truth about Him and some day they will as well.

Now that brings us to verses 7 to 9. Verses 7 to 9, now last time, two weeks ago, we looked at verse 7; I'm just going to give you a brief review. These three verses are specific looks at events in the life of Christ. Verse 7 looks at His trial. Verse 8 looks at His death. And verse 9 looks at His burial. Again, amazing in their detail, and what we see here is the silent, slaughtered Servant. The idea that He is voluntarily giving up His life, that He is willingly, obediently submitting in silence to the purpose of God. And it is God's will and God's pleasure, as verse 10 says, to crush Him, to put Him to grief, to render Him as a guilt offering, that is the will of God. He knows that. "It's not My will, but Thine be done," and He submits fully to it.

In that submission there is a demonstration from His behavior. He is silent in His trial. He is obviously silent in His death and in His burial. There are no protests leading up to that. He is silent in verses 7, 8 and 9. In fact, just to remind you, He's silent in the entire chapter. The Messiah never speaks in this chapter, never. He is the silent sufferer through this entire chapter. And, in particular, in verses 7 to 9, because this is where it really gets ugly. Verse 7 is about His trial, "He was oppressed, He was oppressed." That term has to do with all of the forms of injustice that came against Him.

It is repeated again in verse 8 by oppression and judgment. And there oppression is linked to judgment, and judgment, of course, is a judicial term that speaks specifically of the trial events. So this is the oppression that came against Him at His trial in particular. His arrest, a horrible experience, the following abuse. Subsequent to that, false witnesses, liars, and all of the other things that came with it; there was no crime committed; there was no evidence presented. There were declarations repeatedly of His innocence. He was physically abused, spit on, hit with fists in the face, beaten in the head with sticks, crown of thorns crushed into His head. You know all of that. All of that that came His way was part of the trial and the verdict that the trial reached.

Just a word about the verb “afflicted.” “He was afflicted.” Literally it’s a passive in the Hebrew; He allowed Himself to be afflicted. He allowed Himself to be afflicted. He was under illegal, unconscionable, unrighteous jurisdiction and He allowed Himself to be afflicted. This may well be where Paul draws, “He humbled Himself,” because this verb can actually go to that extent in its meaning. He allowed Himself to be afflicted, hunted in the night, arrested in the garden, tried illegally at night, falsely accused, tormented, tortured, harassed, abused. And then a verdict is rendered that He must die and die by crucifixion.

He doesn’t say anything. He didn’t open His mouth. He’s like a lamb that is led to slaughter and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He didn’t open His mouth. He’s like a silent sheep when it’s being slaughtered or sheared. He says nothing. That is, to say nothing in defense of Himself, nothing whatsoever. There is no defense given by Him. He accepted the unrighteous judgment of man in order to accept the righteous judgment of God to make unrighteous sinners the recipients of that very same righteousness. So in verse 7, as we saw, you have a picture of His trial. He is being led off to be slaughtered and He is silent as He goes.

Verse 8 then takes us to His death. “By oppression,” that going back to verse 7 and the whole trial, “and judgment, He was taken away.” Legal terms. The oppression is what came to Him in the injustice. The judgment is the verdict and the expression “and was taken away” is simply the fact that He is turned over to be executed, turned over to the sentence. This is all talking about processes, legal processes. Oppression, His arrest, confinement; judgment is the judicial proceeding, and the final verdict taken away means exactly what it says, from the court, from the trial to be executed.

Pilate orders His execution and he orders Him to be executed the way slaves were executed. He is the Slave of Yahweh. He is executed in a slavish fashion. And His death is described in these words: “He was cut off out of the land of the living,” verse 8. “He was cut off out of the land of the living.” Being cut off out of the land of the living, Jewish expression. It appears in a number of places in the Old Testament. Daniel 9:26 talking about Messiah, says, “Messiah will be cut off.” Daniel also predicted His death.

So He will be executed. That’s what that expression means. He will be murdered; it’s a dramatic way to say it, cut off out of the land of the living, executed, like a lamb led to slaughter. Which the same expression, by the way, is used in Jeremiah 11:19 to refer to himself. Jeremiah saw himself as a lamb being led to slaughter. So, common expression, cut off out of the land of the living. In spite of all that He was, in spite of all that He did, all that He said, the most horrendous injustice in human history is done to Him and He is executed.

The telling statement in this verse is found in the second line, “As for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living?” Who considered it? Who considered that He was violently executed? Who stepped up and protested? That’s what it means. Who saw it for what it was? Where was the high priest in protest? Where were the Sadducees or Pharisees or somebody who was a fastidious adherent to the Jewish order and tradition and Law? Where were the rabbis? Where were the scribes? Where was anybody? Here we find in the prophecy 700 years before it ever happened, the pronouncement that no one will defend Him, no one will defend Him.

Where were His disciples? Well, they were living out Zechariah 13:7 “strike the shepherd and the

sheep will be—” What? – “scattered.” They were long gone. They had fled. Matthew says that they fled and Mark says the same thing that the Shepherd was struck and the sheep were scattered. Who was there to speak in His behalf?

A custom prevailed, by the way. This is most fascinating. Among the Jews in the case of a trial that could lead to execution, it was required that there be a period of time once the verdict was given for people to step up and speak to the innocence of the one who had been set for execution. There was basically a 40-day period. That’s what we find in their literature. Forty days were to pass between the declaration of death and the execution itself, a period of time in which someone could speak in favor of the accused and plead His innocence, which makes an awful lot of sense. They didn’t do that. They got the trial over with in the middle of the night so there was nobody there to interrupt them. Then that very day as the dawn broke, they sent Him in the process that brought Him to death by that very afternoon.

Where were the 40 days? Where were the 40 days? Early in Christian history that began to be asked. Why did the Jews violate that? There appears in answer to that a statement by the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin put together a statement. It is now in the Jewish Talmud, folio 43 in the Jewish Talmud, from the Sanhedrin. It says this, “There is a tradition – ” this is the Sanhedrin’s words – “there is a tradition on the eve of the Sabbath and the Passover they hung Jesus. And the herald went forth before Him for 40 days crying, ‘Jesus goes to be executed because He has practiced sorcery and seduced Israel and estranged them from God. Let anyone who can bring forth any justifying plea for Him come and give information concerning it’ but no justifying plea was found for Him and so He was hung on the eve of the Sabbath and the Passover.”

That’s in the Talmud of the Jews, a lie that they sentenced Jesus and waited 40 days before they executed Him for somebody to show up, and nobody showed up. That’s in the Jewish Talmud authored by the Sanhedrin to cover their tracks. One rabbi, in commenting on it, said...name is Ulla, U-L-L-A...“But do you think that He belongs to those for whom a justifying plea is to be sought?” In other words, He doesn’t even belong to the category of people that you would want to seek a justifying plea for. He was a very seducer, and the all-merciful God has said, “Thou shalt not spare Him or conceal Him,” end quote. The rabbi said He isn’t even worthy of a plea for innocence.

So when Isaiah 53 begins, “Who believed our message, and who responded to the revelation of the arm of the Lord?” We didn’t. And how extreme was their rejection? That extreme that even after they had done all that, and even after He had risen from the dead, and even after the church had been born and begun to grow, they concocted a lie to put in the Talmud to say that they gave 40 days and nobody showed up. But then again, why would anybody show up? He didn’t belong to the category of people who were worthy for someone to make a plea.

They despised everything about Jesus, and it runs very deep. And let me tell you something, folks. It has not been helped through human history by the way the Jews have been treated by so-called Christians, false Christians. Namely way early, early in the Roman Empire, early in the Holy Roman Empire, if you will, the Roman Catholic system. Way, way, way back in the early centuries there was virulent anti-Semitism, and it developed and developed through the centuries under the Orthodox, under the Roman Catholics. It continued to develop even with the Reformers, this animosity toward the Jews. It came through history. It came through history to a point of the Enlightenment when they had rejected their religion and embraced the Enlightenment.

It resurfaces again with the Hitlerian atrocities, and this is attached to Christianity, false forms of Christianity. It doesn't help to perpetuate this even today. Our attitude toward Jewish people has to be one of unrestrained love and compassion and evangelistic zeal. They despised everything about Him. The Sanhedrin declares this about itself. They sit to justify and not to condemn, to save life and not to destroy it. That's their own sort of code. Consequently, this kind of treatment of Jesus violated everything about them. That's how much they hated Him.

And what they're saying in that Talmudic passage that I read was how dare anyone step up and try to defend this vile seducer. No one cared. And that's exactly what Isaiah says will happen. As for His generation, the people alive at His time, who considered it, who thought about it? Who reckoned with what was happening that He was being executed? And who knew that He was being cut off for the transgression of My people, the Jews. That's...My people is a technical term for the Jews, used in chapter 40, used in chapter 51, used in chapter 52, used here again by Isaiah to refer to Israel. Who even had an idea that He was receiving a stroke of judgment from God, not for His own transgression but for the transgression of My people. No one even thought of it, and they still don't. They still don't.

There's even Caiaphas, you remember, in John chapter 11 who was so worried of what the Romans were going to do to take away his power, that he said, "We better kill Jesus or the Romans are going to kill us. And it's better that He should die than the nation." And he made a prophecy that He would die for the nation. And He did die for the nation, for the Jews, and for all from all nations who would put their trust in Him. In chapter 55 and verse 5 of Isaiah, "You will call a nation you do not know and a nation which knows you not will run to you because the Lord your God, even the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified You."

This is the promise of Gentile salvation. And then the promise is extended to everyone, "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He's near. Let the wicked forsake his way, the unrighteous man his thoughts," and so it goes. There's an invitation to come from any nation of people who know not God, a no-nation. Like Jesus said, "Sheep of another fold." The Jews know the man Jesus was struck dead. They know He was struck dead. They believe He was struck dead by God, but for His own blasphemies. Such a blasphemer that He wasn't worthy for anyone to step up to His defense. The truth is, He was struck by God for the transgressions of His people, including Jews and Gentiles and one day the nation of Israel.

That brings us to verse 9 in the burial, "His grave was assigned with wicked men." Stop right there for a moment. This is an astonishing set of details here. "His grave was assigned with wicked men." Why was His grave assigned with wicked men? Well because He died with criminals, right? Had one on each side of Him. And if you died an ignominious death because of a wretched life, according to Jeremiah 25:33, you would be treated in a degraded way and not have a proper burial. That was very much part of their culture. The ultimate disdain was to leave a body to disintegrate or be road kill, or to throw it into a fire without a proper burial. According to Jeremiah 25:33 you have an illustration of it.

Jesus was crucified between two criminals, Luke 23:33; Matthew 27:38. And here would be the normal disposition. They would die on the cross of asphyxiation, and they would leave Him there. Leave Him there dead and rotting, leave Him there for the birds to pluck out their faces. And they would leave them there like road kill for animals that could climb up the cross to chew their flesh. They would leave them there for the purpose of warning everybody who was watching of what

happens to people who violate the Roman power and the Roman law. That's what was planned for Him. Eventually they would have taken the rotted corpses down and thrown them in a dump.

The Jerusalem city dump was in the Valley of Hinnom; you can go there today. It's not the dump anymore but the Valley of Hinnom on the southeast side of Jerusalem was the city dump, and it was a fire that never went out, a constant fire there. It is a very interesting place, historically. It was the place where apostate Jews and followers of Baal and other Canaanite gods burned their children to the god Molech. You find that back in 2 Chronicles 28:33. Jeremiah talks about it, Jeremiah 7. But this was the place where they offered babies to Molech.

It was there that King Ahaz sacrificed his sons, 2 Chronicles 28. It is the place that Isaiah identifies at the end of his prophecy as the place where the worm never dies. And Jesus said it's a depiction of hell, in Mark, where the worm never dies...Mark 9. And he says that three times. Horrible place where they threw what was left of the corpses. The rabbis describe it as a perpetual fire to consume the filth and the cadavers that are thrown there. So He was executed with criminals. He would end up like criminals.

But God wasn't going to let that happen. Psalm 16 says that He would not allow His Holy One to see corruption. God would never let that happen. So verse 9 says there's an amazing turn. "His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death." How did that happen? He was with a rich man in His death because all along there was a man by the name of Joseph from a place called Arimathea.

This man Joseph had become a disciple of Jesus Christ quietly, and he was very rich. Matthew 27:57, "In the evening there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate, asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate ordered it to be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out in the rock and he rolled a large stone against the entrance to the tomb and went away." He should have been road kill; He should have been in the dump and He ends up in a brand new tomb owned by a rich man. Just exactly what the Holy Spirit reveals to Isaiah was going to happen.

Why? Why? Why was that important? It tells us at the end of verse 9; this is most interesting. "Because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth." That's just a way of saying He was holy on the inside and the outside. Because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. There was nothing in His mouth of a sinful thing, sinful nature. There was no behavior of a sinful nature. And because of His holiness, because as Hebrews says He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, because He was the sinless, spotless Lamb without blemish, the Father never allowed Him to end up in the dump.

So why that? It is a small testimony to His...listen...sinless perfection by His Father and the first small step of His exaltation, the first small step. Even before His resurrection the Father is saying, "I will not allow any further humiliation." There can be no more humiliation. It's as low as He can go, to give Himself to death, even the death of the cross, and that's where the humiliation ends. And this is the first small step up. God honors Jesus in His burial because there was no sin inside, no sin outside. And in a few hours on the third day, He comes out of the grave, and, eventually, in His ascension all the way up. A sweet testimony of the fact that the humiliation was over.

You know, Paul was one of these unbelieving Jews. Paul had such hatred for Jesus Christ that he killed Christians, right? Breathing threatenings and slaughter against the church, it tells us in Acts 8, He went everywhere he could with letters from the authorities who wanted all the Christians they could find thrown in jail or executed. And Paul was the executioner; he was the man. He went everywhere doing that until he ended up on the Damascus Road with orders to persecute Christians there. And you remember what happened. The Lord stopped him, made him blind, and introduced himself, and that was the transformation of the apostle Paul.

And Paul makes a testimony that is really a sort of microcosm. It's a preview of the kind of testimony that the Jews are going to make in the future, and it's also your testimony and mine. Paul says this to the Corinthians. Second Corinthians 5:16, "We have known Christ according to the flesh." "We have known Christ according to the flesh." I knew about Jesus. I knew Him as a man. I had the typical, standard, rabid, zealous, passionate, anti-Jesus Christ attitude of the Jews. That's what he's referring to. "I knew Him according to the flesh. Yet now we know Him in this way no longer." He didn't see Christ the way he had always seen Him.

From the Damascus Road on, his view was totally altered, wasn't it? And so was yours and mine and anyone who comes to Christ. He saw Jesus on the Damascus Road and never saw Jesus the same way again. And you and I may not have been on the road to Damascus or anywhere near Damascus, but you've had a Damascus experience if you're a believer, because you now see Jesus completely differently than you saw Him before you knew Him. And so will the Jews.

For Paul, I think Romans 1 was written with Isaiah 53 in mind. This is how he begins Romans. "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scripture." Paul knew Isaiah 53 because it comes out in his writings. The gospel He preached was the gospel embedded in this chapter. So there is the silent, slaughtered Lamb, cut off out of the land of the living for the transgressions of My people to whom the stroke was due. We're not Israel, but the church is incorporated in the new covenant, and we're part of His people, are we not?

Lord, we thank You again for the clarity and power of this amazing portion of Scripture. No wonder it's been called the fifth gospel because it contains all those things that are so familiar to us in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We are in awe of what we hold in our hands in Scripture, ancient documents with details about the future, and every one of them precise and perfectly accurate, every single one. This is Your book and You have authored it, and it is the truth and is the truth that saves.

We know that saving faith comes by hearing the truth concerning Christ, the word concerning Christ, the message concerning Christ, and we've heard it. We've heard it. We're eager for the next section to get to His resurrection, for salvation comes to those who believe in Him, in His death and His resurrection, confessing Jesus as Lord, confessing that You raised Him from the dead, we can be saved.

Would You bring that salvation to those who are here today who are still outside Your Kingdom, still headed for eternal hell with no hope. May they see the glory of Christ, and may You by Your power change the view. May they never see Christ again the same after today, but always in the glory of the truth of who He is.

Father, now we ask that You would seal these things to our hearts and put them together in our minds in such a way that we can pass them on and proclaim this wonderful gospel. Bring us back together tonight to study the amazing account of Miriam. Make this day a rich and blessed day.

We thank You for the sacrifice that has been made by many in the service of our country. We're deeply grateful but we're even more grateful for the sacrifice that was made by You, our blessed Savior, taking the divine stroke for our transgressions. We embrace that with full faith and gratitude and give You all the glory. Amen.

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