

MY SUBSTITUE

By

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The Apostle Peter wrote that the prophets “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow” (I Peter 1:11). None did this so thoroughly as did the prophet Isaiah, and nowhere else is it so plain as in Isaiah, the 53rd chapter. Isaiah wrote from about 740 to 680 BC.

For the lack of space we will quote only those portions of scripture upon which comment is to be made, trusting that the reader, if not familiar with this chapter, will read it from his own Bible.

(Verse 1) “To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” The arm of the Lord signifies His power, either to lift up the believer or to destroy the unrighteous. This is the heart of the whole matter. God has revealed Himself, His purpose: to save a portion of the race, those who believe Him and receive His saving power. But these are comparatively few. Even today, in spite of our great opportunity for knowledge of the truth, the world has small concern for the power of God to save and to destroy.

(2) “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant...and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” The world was unaware of Christ growing up into manhood. His progress, his perfect obedience to his parents (and thus to God) was under the careful eyes of the Father, but unnoticed by those about him. He made no striking appearance, but looked as an ordinary carpenter’s son was expected to look. He did not enter the world in pomp and ceremony, and never received honor from the world as do such men as the Pope or Billy Graham.

The attraction of Christ was not that he was handsome or had “sex appeal.” It was when he spoke that men began to marvel, because he care to reveal the arm of God in justice to man (John 7:46).

(3) “He was despised and rejected of man.” He was despised because he was righteous, even as Abel was hated by Cain because Cain was evil and his brother was righteous (I John 3:12), and as Jezebel hated Elijah and Herodias hated John the Immerser. Truth is unwelcome to evil. Jesus, the very source of the Truth, was unwelcome to the evil world at every turn. He came to reveal the purpose of God, a purpose which is contrary to the natural inclinations of man, and the world hated him for it.

Truth of God is a two-edged sword. It divides the devout believer from the pretender and incurs his hatred. Popularity with the world is neither the sign of a true doctrine nor a true preacher. Jesus said, “If I say the truth, why do you not believe me?” (John 8:46). He was rejected for bringing the truth from God to man.

(4) “Surely he has borne our grief’s, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.” Jesus did not remove our grief’s and sorrows; we must suffer with him if we would reign with him. But he shared the same grief’s and sorrows we must bear. He knew the meaning of loneliness, heartbreak, rejection and criticism. He “learned obedience by the things he suffered” (Heb. 5:8), and was tempted to the limits of temptation for he never gave in.

Then, after having suffered the grief's and sorrows men heaped upon him, Jesus bore the burden God placed upon him—the guilt of man's sin. It was under the charge of sin that he was "smitten of God." God is the avenger of sin. "Vengeance belongs to me; I will recompense, said the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf" (II Cor. 5:21) and under that sin he was smitten of God. Jesus did not die as a martyr, but as a sinner under judgment!

(5) "But he was wounded for our transgressions..." Yet, it was not for his own sins, but ours. Martin Luther suggested that it was as if Christ has committed every sin that man ever committed. Peter said that "he bore our sins in his body upon the tree." Having assumed our sins, he also assumed the penalty: death!

(6) "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." There is the problem, and the solution. Christ came with the truth, showing the way of God, and man rejected it, even despising it and the One who revealed it. For such rebellion, man is worthy of death. We, everyone are guilty of sin. There is none fulfilling the purpose of God, to reflect His image of goodness. But God has laid the sin on the Lamb, the sin-offering. The Lamb must die.

(7) "And as a sheep before her sheerer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." On the day of judgment when sinners must be brought to account, they will have no excuse, "that every mouth may be stopped" (Rom. 3:19). The just punishment for sin is death and has been since Adam was placed in the Garden (Gen. 2:17). The moment Jesus assumed the sin-guilt of man he also assumed the just sentence, death. There was nothing more to be said.

(8) "And as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?" No stronger language could be found to say that the punishment for sin is death! "Cut off from the land of the living!" Not life on some other level or in some other condition, but cut off from life! This is the death due to all who are in sin. Those who watched him die were unaware of the great substitution being made: Christ taking the believer's place in judgment! Even today many speak of his death as the mere proof of man's "inhumanity to man," a dark day of tragedy and defeat. They do not consider that he was put to death for us "to whom the stroke was due." It should be me nailed to the tree! The sinner deserves to die! But instead, the stroke of judgment fell on Jesus.

Some have said that Christ's words "it is finished," uttered just before he actually died, indicate that the atonement was done before he died, that it occurred in his intense suffering. But scripture does not say that the wages of sin is intense suffering! Nor does it say that the penalty in the day of judgment is "spiritual separation from God." Indeed, God turned away from Christ in the role of sin-bearer, so that he died alone. But the suffering and separation from God culminated in his being "cut off" from life. Justice required the stroke was due. It should be me nailed to the tree! The sinner's cross.

If the final punishment for sin is something other than the death of the sinner, then Christ did not meet that penalty, and the justice of God is not satisfied.

(9) "And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death." How perfectly prophecy is fulfilled. Jesus died between two criminals, but it was Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, who furnished the tomb in which he was buried.

(10) “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.” God pleased at the death of His Son? How can it be? Only in that Christ’s death satisfies God’s justice so that man may be saved from final death for eternity.

“When you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” “Soul” refers to life, the total life of the person. It does not mean some unknowable portion of man, planted inside of him. It is the whole life of the person. At the creation, God made a body and infused it with spirit inbreathed by God and “man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). It was the total life, his “soul,” that made up the sin-offering. It included a flesh and blood death, so that it is said we are saved by his blood.

To sin is to rebel against the Creator of life and to lose one’s right to life. But Jesus underwent the loss of life—of soul—for us.

(11) “He shall see the travail of his life and be satisfied.” The awful pain and agony of crucifixion are hard to imagine. In the day of judgment the sinner will suffer such travail both in spirit and body as he is cast into the lake of fire which in Revelation is described as the second death (Re. 20:14).

“By the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many.” God is satisfied when justice is met, and it is met through the death of Jesus, dying for our sins. Note that is for “many”—not for all. Only those who come to a knowledge of the truth of Christ’s death for themselves will be justified.

(12) “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Jesus said, “I lay down my life,” not that he merely poured out his feelings or that God was satisfied by seeing him suffer as the blood oozed from his wounds. But he “poured out his life unto death.” It is precisely the soul that is put to death, as Ezekiel warned, “The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4).

The Bible is silent about an “immortal soul” or the “eternal soul of man.” These concepts derive from philosophy, not revelation. Man is mortal. Only God has immortality (I Tim. 6:16). Jesus took the form of man, became flesh and blood, that he might die a human death in the place of mortal man (Heb. 2:14). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes on him should not **perish**, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The dividing of the spoil is the language of war. The victor takes the spoils. Satan, our adversary, was defeated at the cross. Death and the grave were defeated there. The just penalty for sin was rendered there so that we do not have to suffer it by death to ourselves. The spoils include life and immortality in a new creation where righteousness abounds. We share in the spoils for we are “in Christ” and joint heirs of God with Him.

While Christ died for our sin, he has no sin of his own, so death had no power over Him, and he arose from death. We, too, will arise from death in the last day, because Christ took the ultimate judgment for every sin of our lives.

Forgiveness is not on human terms, as when a person says, “Forget it, we all make mistakes.” God’s forgiveness is based on the absolute and unchanging terms of eternal justice. God forgives because restitution is made in Christ’s death. The charges against us are dropped because the debt is fully paid by Christ. Instead of the death in the lake of fire there is life. Immortality is to be given to the redeemed upon Christ’s coming, at the

day of resurrection. It is then, and not until, that “this mortal shall put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:53). Then the spoils—all that is worthwhile in all of God’s creation, the glorious work of God and all the new creation in its eternal beauty—will be divided to those who have been justified through the death of Christ.

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