

**Reading:** Isaiah 52:13-53:12

**Theme:** Dumb, dreadful and decent.

Knowing the events that occurred at Calvary that first Good Friday, we could assume the passage we read was written by an eyewitness to tell us of the events they had seen. Yet Isaiah wrote it some 700 years **before** the events happened! This shows us God is in control of history and its events, also shows us He is able to make those things known to specially called and equipped ones - prophets. Isaiah spoke from God to his generation, yet among his prophecies he spoke of events that would occur some 200 years later - the captivity in and the return from Babylon. Also, Isaiah saw many centuries ahead. On 4 occasions he spoke of the Servant of the Lord, the Servant songs. The passage we read is the 4<sup>th</sup> Servant song that bring all the other Servant songs together. We have already looked at 3 of its 5 parts.

We are looking at the 4<sup>th</sup> part - **The Servant's Rejection** which focuses on His submissive sufferings, death and burial. Here in v7-9 we are looking at the suffering, crucifixion, death and burial of the Lord Jesus. Let's note 3 things:

### **1. The Dumb Silence.**

The Servant would achieve something remarkable for us. The previous section, the heart of the song, speaks of Him taking our place and suffering for us. We noted He took all the punishment our wrongs, sins deserved in our place as He swapped with us. As He did so, He went through it all in a submissive silence (AV translates "silent" at the end of v7 as "dumb" meaning He said nothing). Yes, we know He spoke, He cried out - 7 sayings from the cross, but not to try to defend Himself, He did not say "*I do not deserve this!*" Nor "*It is the fault of others.*" Even if both things were true!

Isaiah saw Him suffering oppression (v8), or as other versions and footnotes = arrest, prison; even judged in a kangaroo court - the legal proceedings were a travesty of Jewish law procedures and yet He did not try to defend Himself, make excuses, give reasons, did not try to escape or pass the blame. He gave no answer before Herod (Luke 23:9) and even when maltreated by the Roman soldiers and Pilate, He did not react or retaliate in word or deed - 1 Peter 2:22-23 *"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth." When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.'*

Here we read He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, or as a sheep to shearers. We are to note lambs are not silent when that happens, nor sheep as they go to be sheared. Sheep and lambs, especially at slaughterhouses, can detect and smell fear and death and so kick up a fuss. The only time a lamb going to the slaughter is quiet, or a sheep to be sheared is when it is led there by one it knows and trusts. The Servant, the Lord Jesus, went to the cross submissively for He knew He was going there in the will and purposes of His Father, who He loved, delighted to serve and obeyed completely. God the Son was led there by God the Father, so went willingly, submissively and silently.

As God the Son He had power over the very lives of those who crucified Him - He held their next breath and heartbeat in His control. Jesus could have called 12 legions of angels at any time. One Roman legion consisted of up to 6800 men (*depending on where they were stationed*), so  $12 \times 6800 = 81,600$ . Those angels could have done some damage! We read in OT that one angel went out on its own and destroyed an army of 185,000 – what then could 12 legions of angels do! (*Roughly 1500 with 7 zeros after it = 15 billion!*) Jesus could have called those legion. Personally, I

wonder if He restrained them as they would want nothing to happen to the One they had worshipped since their creation! Incredibly Jesus went willingly, submissively to the cross.

He did not protest, argue or retaliate. In fact, He prayed for those who executed Him. This was not because He was crazy or mad, but He went to that cross for us; the wrath and punishment from God for all that **our** sins, all our wrongs deserve. His silence was in stark contrast to the accusations and derision He experienced from those around the cross. I wonder what we would we have called out if we'd been there? But what does our heart and life call out today as we consider the cross of Jesus?

## **2. The Dreadful Death.**

The servant, the Lord Jesus, God's own darling Son who took a real human body to Himself, was cut-off from the land of the living. This phrase "*cut-off*" is the opposite to a tranquil, peaceful death and apparently is always used in OT of an agonising and violent death. Perhaps we have read history and learned of the Roman process of crucifixion, if so, we will grasp something of the violence of the death Jesus died - beaten, scourged with a cat of 9 tails-like whip -which often exposed organs and people died in the process; then the actual crucifixion itself - all these were violent acts, planned to inflict maximum pain and suffering, yet at the same time not to kill a person quickly, but designed to let them die slowly and in constant agony.

Isaiah saw, by prophetic revelation, the servant cut-off and blurts out as to why He was dying, cut-off - *for the transgressions of my people*. Not the people, but **my** people! Some scholars and commentators question if at this point it is the Lord speaking personally through Isaiah! We are to understand that God has people, all known to Him and the Saviour's death will only be

savingly effective for them; only those who trust in the Saviour will have their sins dealt with. Those who do not believe, who can't be bothered or actively reject the Saviour - His life, suffering, death and resurrection will be of no use and have no saving effect for them. This Saviour needs to be personally trusted and believed in. It is not automatically applied to everyone, no matter what religious rites or rituals they have had done to them as a child or adult. It has to be a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus and not just a creed that is said out of routine, but only for those who have a personal trust and relationship with Jesus. Do you have this Jesus as **your** own Saviour?

He was stricken for the transgressions of His people. Who struck Him, what was going on there? Does this refer to the beatings and scourging? Yes, in one sense, but this is a specific striking for the transgressions (*the breaking of God's laws and standards*) of those who are termed "*my people*". God's law was broken; all of us are guilty of that - small laws, little things as well as big things. Do we understand we all break God's law, no one is perfect and we are all lawbreakers, transgressors and we deserve God's punishment?

There on the cross the Lord Jesus was punished in our place, took the punishment we deserved from God as Judge. The Bible describes that punishment for us – it is Hell! We are given awesome and terrifying picture portraits of Hell, to impress its horror, its seriousness upon us. Yet as bad, as terrible as we can imagine it to be, its reality is far, far worse. Yet the Lord Jesus took this, our punishment upon Himself as He was made sin, the sin bearer and took our punishment in our place. When we believe in Him as our Saviour, that awesome event on Calvary is legally and divinely put to our account in heaven, all our guilt and sin is

removed off us and our debt is paid completely by all that Jesus silently suffered there on the cross of Calvary.

This event is an awesome event, yet we are to understand it personally that, as the old chorus says *“Wounded for me, wounded for me. There on the cross He was wounded for me. Gone my transgressions and now I am free. All because Jesus was wounded for me.”* We are to be amazed, staggered that He is not just the sin bearer, or He took the sin of the world, but He took **my sin, your sin** and its punishment in our place! It is to affect us in our daily lives. It is amazing God the Father loved you and me, so much He would give His darling Son over to such a horrors of suffering; but even more that God the Son would love us so much to do it for us when we were His enemies.

It was a dreadful death for Jesus, but it is the source and cause of eternal life for us, for all who trust Him. Although it was bad for Him, it was a great and good event for us! We call that day “Good Friday” – so true good could come to us who deserved that dreadful death and suffering under God’s anger. Yet instead we have eternal life offered freely, truly and genuinely to us.

### **3. The Decent Burial.**

The Servant spoken of here, was viewed as a nobody. He seemed as nothing and even His silence in the face of His sufferings, must have, in the view of His enemies, made Him appear as a nobody! Yet He is the only way of salvation, the great and glorious hope for those who have gone astray from God. Incredibly, He seemed as nothing, was rejected and despised (v2-3). If we looked on Him, He would seem as a thing of horror and nightmares (52:14) - no longer humanlike, but like a mutilated piece of meat hanging on a Roman execution gibbet. His enemies were glad, satisfied – for He claimed to be a somebody, made extravagant claims and they

turned those claims upon Him. mocked Him with them as He hung naked on the cross *“If you are the Son of God, come down from it and we will believe in you”*.

To the Jewish hierarchy, to the Romans He was viewed as a criminal, a wicked man and was dying there with 2 other criminals, wicked men. Isaiah, all those centuries before it occurred, foresaw this and wrote of Him dying with, having His lot and His grave with the wicked. Here it is a plural word “wicked ones”. Jesus died there with criminals. Yes, we know one turned to Him and believed on Him and at the moment of that criminal’s own death, he went straight from the cross and suffering, to the glory of heaven, paradise and was with Jesus. The other criminal was in the same situation, it seems he carried on mocking. We have no record of him trusting Jesus. From that situation, there is both an encouragement and a warning - an encouragement as there is hope for all trust the Lord Jesus even in their last moments, but a solemn warning for we may not believe even in our last moments on earth!

Ordinarily the bodies of criminals executed by the Romans would have been dumped in a communal grave and buried in dishonour. This is what the Jews wanted for Jesus - dishonour even after death and this would have been His lot, but Isaiah then adds a strange line *“and with the rich in His death”* here the word “rich” is singular, meaning “a rich man”. We read in NT that among Jesus’ followers was Joseph of Arimathea, who was a rich man and he had a new tomb cut out (*probably for himself*). He and another Jewish councilmember (Nicodemus) went to Pilate as for Jesus’ body, which was only released to them after Pilate had checked with the soldiers that Jesus really was dead before releasing Jesus’ body to Joseph and Nicodemus.

These two influential and important men, tenderly treated the mutilated body of the One whom they followed with great care and honour - a large amount of expensive spices was gently and carefully wrapped in the grave clothes – picture a mummy-type process of cloth strips. They then laid Him in the rich man’s tomb and so He really was associated with the rich man in His death.

But why? Why is this noted by Isaiah? Why did it happen there at Calvary? Probably to make Jesus’ Resurrection more noticeable and certain - because His body was checked and verified by His enemies, His executioners and His friends as being really and truly dead. The burial process prevented any Houdini-like escape, as it would have sealed the fate if He was in a swoon or a coma – for it would have restricted any blood supply and would suffocate Him. Yet there was no chance of Him having any life – it was verified by the soldier piercing Jesus’ side with a spear, for the water and blood indicated the totality of death, as they were signs of a ruptured, a burst heart!

Yet this burial was significant because it gave this despised one a vestige of honour. The cross was the way to glory. In fact, as Jesus anticipated the cross, He prayed “*Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify You*” (John 17:1). Incredibly, the awesome, horrific sufferings of the cross were the beginning of the glorification, as well as the source and reason for the glorification of the Lord Jesus. For Him now the horror, the disfigurement, the pain and suffering were all over. Now there was no reason why He should not be honoured in His death and be given a decent burial. I sometimes wonder if Joseph and Nicodemus, two older men, ever chatted and even laughed about the waste of time and money with the spices, bandages, the tomb - all that expense, time and effort, yet Jesus only borrowed it for the weekend!

At the time of His burial, as honourable as it was, it seemed to those men, to the disciples and all Jesus' followers, that their hopes lay literally dead and buried - after all that He done and taught. He had done no violence; no deceit was in His mouth and yet He had died as the worst of criminals. Those around the cross were expecting great things of Jesus and must have been truly devastated. Hopelessness would spread into their lives and grip them with an ice-cold hopeless despair. That would be their state until the first day of the week, when that hopelessness, that despair was changed and their lives were unimaginably transformed as the events of Easter Sunday unfolded.

We need to ask ourselves, if we have seen this Servant, the Lord Jesus dying under the wrath of God for **our own** sins, so that we could go free. If you have seen this, then have you trusted the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour? If we have trusted Him, does the enormous truth of all our sins forgiven and eternal peace with God affect us and thrill us in our day by day lives? Such amazing things should affect our lives every day. We are to realise that these things were confirmed as true and real by Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Yes, this Servant suffered and died, was given a decent burial, but neither the grave, or death itself could hold Him and v10-12 shows us of this glorious resurrection truth, but that is for next time.