

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!

In the way of introduction, notice on your handout the verses I have from **Exodus 29:38-39** “Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; **two lambs** of the first year, **day by day** continually. ³⁹The **one lamb** thou shalt offer **in the morning**; and the **other lamb** thou shalt offer at **even**.”

Imagine being a priest at that time. Twice a day—day after day—you had to **offer a little lamb** on the altar for a burnt offering. Without getting too graphic or specific, the lamb had to be **killed** a certain way—and its **blood was collected** to sprinkle upon the altar. The lamb had to be **cut up** a certain way...and **washed** a certain way...and then have a **special paste** made of flour, oil, and wine placed on it before it was burnt.

As I was reading these verses earlier this week, **I couldn't help but wonder** how often the priest thought about the **innocence of the lamb** that was being killed. Did they sometimes say to themselves, “This poor little lamb has done absolutely nothing to deserve this!” We obviously can't say if that is what they thought because the Bible doesn't record their thoughts for us!

But instead of focusing on the innocence of **those** lambs, I want us to do what John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus coming: “Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” (**John 1:29**)

There are a number of places we could turn to **in the NT** to see how Jesus was the Lamb of God, but we are going to look at Isaiah 53 **in the Old Testament** instead. As we do that, it is fascinating to see just **how specific** the prophecies about the coming Suffering Substitute were—even though they were written more than **700 years before** Jesus came and fulfilled them!

As we go through Isaiah 53, one thought you may have is this: How did the Jews **not see**—how could they **not understand**—that **Jesus was the One** the prophet Isaiah was writing about? That's a fair question—but not the most **important** one. A more important question—one that I believe God wants all of us to ask ourselves—is this: “Do **I believe** that Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world?”

Please turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 53 and follow along as I read vss 1-6. We are going to be focusing our attention on verses 3 and following, but I do want to point out a couple of things in verses 1 and 2 first.

--vs 1 (mid) “...and to whom is the **arm of the Lord** revealed?”

Who—or what—is “the arm of the Lord?” The arm of the Lord is the manifestation of God's saving power—but it is also referred to as a “He” in vs 2 – “**For He** shall grow up before Him as a tender plant...”

--If we let the context—the surrounding verses—help us determine the meaning, we see that the “He” of vs 2 is the same “He” as in vs 3...and 4...and 5...and 6...and the rest of the chapter. So...the “**He**” of vs 2—is the Suffering Servant of vss 3-6—and is “the arm of the Lord” in vs 1!

--**Now notice the middle of vs 2** “...and when we shall see Him [the suffering servant], there **is no beauty** that we should desire Him.” Simply put, Jesus **looked like any other male Jew** at that time. He did not “stand out” in the crowd, He was not “tall, dark, and handsome,” and He certainly **didn't have a halo** around His head to draw attention to Himself!

1. The sorrows of the Servant

Vs 3 “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...”

Jesus was a man of sorrows, wasn't He? We **sing about** it in songs:

Man of sorrows! What a name, for the Son of God who came.

Ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah! What a Savior!

God tells us about it here in Isaiah 53:3.

And **we see it** in the New Testament.

--In John 6:66 we read: “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” --In John 7:5 we read that His brethren—His biological half-brothers—did not believe in Him.”

--Judas betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver (Mt 26:15)—and with a kiss (Lk 22:48)!

--All the disciples forsook Jesus and fled we are told in Matthew 26:56.

--And Peter—the one who bragged that he would **die for Jesus**—denied that he even knew Jesus, didn't he? **Mt 26:74-75** "Then began he [Peter] to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. ⁷⁵ And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."

Jesus was despised—and rejected of men. He was a man of sorrows—and acquainted with grief. And because He experienced the pain of rejection and sorrow, **He can empathize with you.**

Next, let's consider... **2. The substitutionary sufferings of the Servant**
Why were lambs sacrificed?

Was it because **they were bad** and needed to be punished for their behavior? Obviously not!

Was it because God was **hungry** and that is what He **liked to eat**? Of course not!

Lambs—and bulls and rams and goats—were killed **as a substitute!** They were punished **instead of—in the place of**—the one that deserved to be punished! Notice God's emphasis on Jesus being **our** substitute.

A. Jesus' substitution for us

--Vs 4. "He hath borne **our** griefs, and carried **our** sorrows..."

--Vs 5. "He was wounded for **our** transgressions, He was bruised for **our** iniquities: the chastisement of **our** peace was upon Him; and with **His stripes** we are healed."

Just as a lamb was killed because of someone else's sins—and not their own; Jesus was killed—He died as a substitute—**for the sins of others** and not His own! But let's not forget that the "sins of others" is not just those "**other evil people**" that you know. It is for **your sins—and mine**—that He came to be a substitute for!

--**II Cor 5:21a** "For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus] to **be sin for us, who knew no sin...**"

--Jesus—who had no sin and knew no sin—was **made sin** for us!

--**Hebrews 4:15** "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, **yet without sin.**"

--**I Peter 2:22, 24a** "**Who did no sin**, neither was guile found in His mouth: ²⁴ Who His own self **bare our sins in his own body** on the tree..."

Jesus did not suffer **for Himself**—He suffered **for us!** We see that here in Isaiah 53—and we see it in the NT. But not only is there an emphasis on the Jesus' **substitution** for us, there is also an emphasis on...

B. Jesus' suffering for us

What did Jesus' suffering for us entail? What did it include?

1) Grievs and sorrows. We see that in the first part of vs 4. What is the **difference** between griefs and sorrows? Most commentators suggest that "griefs" would be better translated "sicknesses" based on Matthew 8:17. "Griefs," then, probably refers to pains of **the body**; "sorrows" to the pains of **the mind**.

Jesus, while on earth, certainly "bore and carried"—meaning healed—the **physical** illnesses and **mental anguish** of those whose hearts were broken over sin and because of sin.

2) Misunderstandings. We see that in the second half of vs 4: "...yet we did esteem Him stricken of God, and afflicted." Did people believe Jesus was **being judged by God**? They did, didn't they? **How do we know?**

Because of how they **jeered and mocked Him** while He was on the cross! Here is just a sampling: **Mt 27:40, 42-43** "And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, **save thyself**. If thou be the Son of God, **come down** from the cross. ⁴² He saved others; **Himself He cannot save**. **If He be** the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. ⁴³ He trusted in God; **let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him**: for He said, I am the Son of God."

3) Physical pain. We see that in vs 5 in the words wounded, bruised, chastisement, and stripes.

--"Wounded" carries the idea of **pierced**. **Ps 22:16** says "...they pierced my hands and my feet." That is an incredibly accurate description of what happened when Jesus was crucified. Jesus had nails pounded into His hands—actually His wrists—and into His feet. Pretty safe to say they were **spikes**—pounded in with a maul!

What did Thomas want to see as proof that Jesus had risen from the dead? John 20:25 "...But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His **hands the print of the nails**, and put my finger into the **print of the nails**, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."

In Lk 24:40, the resurrected Jesus showed the disciples **His hands and His feet**.

--"Bruised" is not what we think of when we hear the word. It does not mean the **development of a bruise** from **bumping** something—or **getting hit**. It means "crushed, beat to pieces, shattered." One note I had said it is the **strongest Hebrew word** used for suffering. Although Jesus was not literally "broken into pieces," His **bones were out of joint** as He hung on the cross. Isaiah 52:14 says His visage—meaning His appearance—was **so marred** that He almost didn't look human. His body endured **excruciating pain**, the weight of His own body **pulling His bones out of joint** as He hung on the cross.

--"Chastisement" refers to correction, discipline, or punishment. Our sin puts us at enmity with God—and the only way to **have reconciliation** is for our sin to be justly punished. Jesus **took the punishment** that we deserved in order to secure our peace **with God**.

--With His stripes we are healed. The healing **is spiritual**; the stripes refer to the **furrows left on His back** from being whipped by strips of leather imbedded with sharp objects.

Jesus suffered this **cruel, inhumane treatment** by those who hated Him. They mocked Him...and spit on Him... and taunted Him...and tortured Him. And yet, I'm of the opinion that the **greatest suffering** of Jesus—and I believe that which He **dreaded the most**—was not in the **physical realm**, but in the **spiritual**.

We see that in the end of vs 6 "...and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

What does it mean to have God **put on Jesus** the iniquity of us all? I believe it means that **Jesus suffered the horrors of hell**—which means to be separated from God—when God laid our sin on Him—then **turned away**. I'm calling that the... **4) Wrath of God**.

We have this thought powerfully conveyed in some wonderful songs.

Stanza 3 of "His Robes for Mine" (279)

"His robes for mine: God's justice is appeased. Jesus is crushed, and thus the Father's pleased.

***Christ drank God's wrath** on sin then cried, 'Tis done!' Sin's wage is paid; propitiation won."*

Stanza 2 of "In Christ Alone" (239)

"In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless Babe!

This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save—

*Till on the cross as Jesus died, **the wrath of God was satisfied**.*

***For ev'ry sin on Him was laid**; here in the death of Christ I live."*

Stanza 1 of "How Deep the Father's Love for Us" (pg 106)

"How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure

That He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure.

*How great the pain of searing loss; **the Father turns His face away**.*

As wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory."

Hopefully some of you are thinking, 'That's all well and fine, Pastor, but **we don't base what we believe** on our song book—we base it **on the Bible!**' To which I reply, "Amen!"

So...is there a **Biblical basis** for God saying He turned His back on Jesus?

I believe there is in Jesus' words found in **Mt 27:46** "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

There are only two explanations for what Jesus said.

Option 1) Jesus **wasn't sincere** when He said it and didn't really mean it. Is that a **good** option? **Obviously not** because it would mean Jesus was pretending and was **saying something that wasn't true**. If Jesus said something that wasn't true, **He was lying** and obviously couldn't be a sinless Savior!

That leaves us with...**Option 2**) Somehow...some way—in a mystery beyond our human comprehension the Trinity was **temporarily** “broken.” God the Father **turned His back on** God the Son. ‘How can that be, Pastor?’ I don’t know—but I do know Jesus **was not pretending** when He uttered those words on the cross!

Back to Isaiah 53. We’ve seen the **sorrows** of the Servant in vs 3—and the **substitutionary sufferings** of the Servant in vss 4-6. Next, let’s consider... **3. The silence of the Servant**

We see that in vs 7 “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, **yet He opened not His mouth**: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, **so He openeth not His mouth.**” Did you catch that? **Twice** —in this one verse—we read that Jesus **was silent**. In fact, the Bible makes much of Jesus’ silence while in the presence of those that accused Him. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record it.

Mark put it like this in Mark 15:4-5 “And Pilate asked Him again, saying, **Answerest thou nothing?** behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus **yet answered nothing**; so that Pilate marvelled.”

Peter brought it up as well—with the reminder that **Jesus is the example** God wants us to follow: I Peter 2:21-23 “For even **hereunto were ye called**: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example**, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, **neither was guile found in His mouth**: Who, when He was reviled, **reviled not again**; when He suffered, **He threatened not**; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously:”

Last Monday—the same day I wondered if the OT priests ever thought about the innocence of the lambs there were killing—I read a quote from a devotional book called “Streams in the Desert.” **Notice quote**:

“There is no spectacle in all the Bible so sublime as the silent Savior answering not a word to the men who were maligning Him, and whom He could have laid prostrate at His feet by one look of His Divine power, or one word of His fiery rebuke. But **He let them say and do their worst**, and He stood in the power of stillness—God’s holy silent Lamb.” (Mrs. Charles E. Cowman, Vol 1, entry for March 18th).

Quite a thought, isn’t it? As A.B. Simpson states here, one **look**—or one **word**—from Jesus and all those who were mocking Him would have laid flat on their faces at His feet! Jesus Himself said in Mt 26:53 “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”

He didn’t do that though, did He? **Why?** Why didn’t He call twelve legions of angels? Jesus Himself gives us the answer in the next verse, Mt 26:54 “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”

And in that answer, we see... **4. The superiority of Jesus over a sacrificial lamb**

How is Jesus superior to a sacrificial lamb? There are obviously several ways; we’ll look briefly at two:

A. Jesus’ sacrifice was freely given—not forced

--Did literal, physical little lambs **volunteer** to be sacrificed? Probably not!

--Did an ewe go up to the priest and somehow convey that her little one be chosen? Again, not likely!

But Jesus willingly left heaven to come to earth for that very purpose, didn’t He?

A **lamb’s life was taken from it—Jesus willingly gave up His!** John 10:18 “No man taketh it [life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again....”

A second important difference is this: B. Jesus’ sacrifice was forever finished—not frequently repeated

Please take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews 10. This is a rich and wonderful chapter that hopefully you will come back to on your own.

--Vs 3. How often were the lambs offered? Twice a day...day after day...month after month...and year after year. **Why?**

--Vs 4. Pretty safe to say that if the blood of **bulls and goats** didn’t take away sins, that the blood **of lambs** didn’t take away sins either.

--Vs 11. Here we see the same thought from vs 3 and 4 repeated—the sacrifice of animals can't take away sins!

--Vs 12. "But this man"—which man? **The priest** in vs 11—**or Jesus Christ**, who offered Himself once for all—in vs 10? It's pretty easy to see from the context, that verse 12 is talking **about Jesus**.

--**How many** sacrifices did Jesus offer? **One**; Himself! **How long** was His sacrifice good for? For ever!

--**What did** Jesus do after He offered Himself once? **Sat down** on the right hand of God.

--**Why** is that significant? Because His work **was done!** One sacrifice...for sins...for ever!

The death of Jesus **does not have to be "reenacted"** over and over and over again like some believe and practice. That truth is repeated again in vs 14.

--Vs 14. "For by one offering He hath perfected **for ever** them that are sanctified."

--**Who** are the sanctified? Those who are set apart as God's children.

--**Who** are set apart as God's children? Those who **have received Christ** and have believed on Him as the Lamb of God that paid the penalty for their sins when He shed His blood on the cross.

--**How sufficient** was Jesus' offering of Himself? It perfects us...it completes us...it redeems us—for ever!

Before I close in prayer, I want to share a few thoughts in the way of application. What would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

Remember what I said earlier? Don't dwell on **how the Jews didn't recognize Jesus** as the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. Instead, this is the question we should be asking ourselves:

"Do **I believe** that Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world?"

If you do, here's what I believe that will look like:

1. First, we should **never doubt the love of God!** If the God of heaven loved you enough to leave heaven and die in your place, how can you doubt that He loves you?

--To doubt God's love is to doubt His Word and His character—both of which is sinful!

2. Second, we need to be thoroughly convinced that there is **absolutely no other way to be saved** other than what Jesus did for us on the cross! We see that truth in John 14:6 and I John 5:12.

--Do you have the Son?

--To try to get to heaven without Christ is to say that what He did as the Lamb of God was not enough!

3. Third—if you are a child of God—**you are not your own** because you've been bought with a price!