

THE CROSS BEHIND A VEIL

Isaiah 53:4-12

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This passage is perhaps the most vivid depiction of our Savior's vicarious suffering. In these verses we find the graphic rhetoric of Messiah's agony foretold by the prophet Isaiah. His multi-faceted, horrific affliction is brought painfully into focus for us to see.

Notice the first word in v. 4: "Surely" (וַיִּשֹׁרֵר). It "is a conjunction emphasizing the unexpected" (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 430). The unregenerate man does not receive Jesus because there is no fleshly appeal to Him. What crowd would I run with if I was born a Jew and heard His message and watched Him perform miracles? What group of disciples would I be a part of in John 6? According to Isaiah 53:3, I would despise and reject Him.

The Description of Messiah's Suffering

- Stricken (v. 4, 8). Genesis 12:17; 2 Kings 15. Jesus was stricken with the disease of our sins (Young, 3:346)
- Smitten (v. 4). One severely punished by God (Young, *Isaiah*, 3:346).
- Afflicted (v. 4, 7). This word suggests a humbling and oppressing (Young, 3:346-7).
- Wounded (v. 5) literally, pierced (Isaiah 51:9; cf. Jeremiah 51:52; Psalm 69:26; 109:22). "There were no stronger expressions to be found in the language, to denote a violent and painful death" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 318).
- Crushed (v. 5, 10). KJV, "bruised." "It is used of people being trampled to death the inflicting and enduring of crushing agonies ending in death (Lamentations 334)" (Motyer, 430).
- Chastised (v. 5). This has the thought of remedy or correction (*musar*, often found in Proverbs). The punishment necessary to restore peace with God (Motyer, 430).
- Whipped (v. 5). Also "wounds." These refer to lacerations; wounds opened and untreated.
- Oppressed (v. 7, 8). The idea here is hunted down with the intent to mistreat or kill (cf. 1 Samuel 13:6; 14:24).
- Cut off (v. 8). It's a word with almost an unbroken record of violence (including cutting a child in two in 1 Kings 3:25; 2 Kings 6:4; Lamentations 3:54).
- Sickened (v. 10). Personal suffering as endured by the sufferer in all its painfulness and weakness (Motyer, 439; Young, 3:354).
- Anguished (v. 11). This refers to the toilsome work of humans (Ecclesiastes 1:3; 2:10). It is used of the rigor and discipline of doing something painstakingly (Motyer, 441).
- Poured Out (v. 12). "The word means to strip or empty, or pour clean out, even to the very last remnant" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 339).

The Cause of Messiah's Suffering

There is a first cause, the will of the Lord (v. 4, 6, 10). There is a second cause, our sins. The word "for" in our English translations comes from a Hebrew preposition (*min*) which means "He was pierced and crushed on account of our sins and iniquities" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 318). "He was wounded *because of* our transgressions (v. 5, 8). He was crushed *on account of* our iniquities (v. 5, 11).

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered, was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression, but Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor, vouchsafe to me Thy grace.
("O Sacred Head, Now Wounded," J.W. Alexander's version, 1830)

The Result of Messiah's Suffering

This is substitution language (cf. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 429; cf. Leviticus 16).

- Peace (*shalom*): *his chastisement . . . our peace* (v. 5).
- Wellness: *his stripes . . . our healing* (v. 5).
- Intercession: *his sin-bearing . . . our intercession* (v. 12).

Two key ideas: sin-bearing and wrath-absorbing. This is what is bound up in the rich word "propitiation" (in the ESV: Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10). The word means "appeasement necessitated by sin, *expiation*" (BDAG, 474). So the effect of Christ's work is one that appeases the wrath of God which is aroused by our sin which in effect manifests our antipathy against Him.

What we have before us are the reminders are symbols of the description of Messiah's suffering. The bread reminds us that His body was *crushed and broken*. The juice reminds us that His blood was *poured out*. These are graphic but precious reminders for the believer.