

THE TWO SIDES OF THE CROSS

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Intro: (Read the text.) This generally recognized among evangelical believers, as the greatest single passage in the OT on the death of Christ. We have just gone through this section of Isaiah in our Bible reading. I always love to read Isaiah 53 which actually begins with the last three verses of chapter 52. There is not the slightest possibility that Isaiah could have been speaking of anyone but the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the passage that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when the Holy Spirit told Philip, the deacon, to join himself to the chariot in which the eunuch was returning home from Jerusalem. He evidently had become a Jewish proselyte, but he still had a hungry heart. The verses of Isaiah 53 that he was reading were verses 7 and 8. And he wanted to know who the prophet was of whom Isaiah had written. And so Philip, we are told, “began at that same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). The result was that the eunuch was saved, and verse 39 tells us that after Philip was “caught away,” the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39).

This section of Isaiah actually begins with the final result of the work of our Lord by telling us that God's Servant, would prosper in His work, and that he would be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (Isa. 52:13). There are expositors of this passage who believe that those three words, “exalted and extolled, and be very high” refer to the resurrection of the Lord, His ascension back to the Father, and then His being seated at the right hand of the Father, His work completed, and fully accepted.

So we are on good ground when we say that this speaks of Christ.

I think that verse 5 is the verse that Handel was doing his work on, in composing the Messiah, that someone found him with his head down, with tears flowing, as the truth of that verse gripped his own soul. The Lord only knows how many times this passage has been used by the Spirit of God in drawing sinners to the Savior.

But the part that I want to emphasize tonight is that there are actually two sides to what was taking place on the Cross. One has to do with what men did to our Lord; the other has to do with what God was doing. The first we can see through the words of Scripture; the second no one could see, not the people who stood around our Lord's Cross when He died, nor

even our Lord's disciples.

For example, verse 14 could be seen. (Read the KJV and then the NIV. In the NIV it reads:

14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness — (Isa. 52:14, NIV).

This meant that when people looked at our Lord on the Cross, His body had been so mutilated by His enemies that they had a hard time believing that it was a human body.

Look on down to verse 5 where again our Lord's sufferings are described. I am thinking of the words, "wounded . . . bruised . . . chastisement . . . stripes . . ."

In verse 7 we read that "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted," and that "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." These are words which described what people could see.

In verse 8 we read about Him being "cut off" after which the word "stricken" is used.

It was a long time in my experience as a Christ before I got beyond words like these, beyond the descriptions given to us in the Gospels of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not need to turn to this passage unless you want to, but be sure that you listen to the words as I read Matthew's account of our Lord's time before the Jews, and then the treatment given to Him by the Roman soldiers.

(Read Matt. 27:11-44; Mark 14:55-65; 15:1-38; Luke 22:63-65; 23:10-11; John 19:1-6.)

Why is it that we have four accounts of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ? One reason is that we would realize how much the Lord Jesus Christ was hated, and the extremes to which they would go, Jews and Gentiles, in venting their hatred upon our Lord. You talk about man's inhumanity to man, there never was a greater illustration than in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even the crucifixion of our Lord was an event of horror to look upon, and of indescribable suffering.

But (and this was years ago) I began to note another emphasis, not only in Isaiah 53, but also in the preaching of the Apostles. I am thinking now about the other side of what was taking place when our Lord died on the Cross.

Look with me at Isa. 53:4, and 5, and 6, and “stricken” in verse 8. See also verse 10.

In the NT we read verses like 2 Cor. 5:21 and Gal. 3:13.

There are two side to the Cross – one having to do with man and his intense hatred of all that has to do with goodness and righteousness. The other has to do with God. But these two can never be separated. God was working through one as well as the other. But the work was completed when our Lord Jesus Christ finally died.

How should we come to the communion table to partake of the Lord’s Supper?

Let me suggest three ways:

- 1) In deep humiliation for our sins.
- 2) In utter amazement at the love of God.
- 3) With a sincere prayer that the Savior’s obedience to the Father’s will, might be reflected in the character of our Lord’s sufferings for our salvation.

Cf. Phil. 2:5-11.