

(Matt 27:57), who placed it in the sepulchre in his own garden, we see an agreement at once between the gospel history and the prophetic words, which could only be the work of the God of both the prophecy and its fulfillment” (Baron 2000: 115).

“Without the commentary supplied by the fulfilment, it would be impossible to understand verse 9 at all.’ Like the other enigmas of this Song, this too is written so that when the turn of events provides the explanation we shall know for certain that we stand in the presence of the Servant of the Lord” (Motyer 1993: 436).

“*Violence* is active hostility against people; *deceit* is a state of the heart; *mouth* specifies sins of speech. Together they affirm the sinlessness of the Servant in thought, word and deed” (Motyer 1999: 381).

“But as mystifying as such righteousness is, it at least moves us toward clearing up another mystery. How can someone suffer for others, or suffer in a way that produces healing and reconciliation in their relationship with God.... Only someone who did not deserve the same punishment he or she did, someone who could say in absolute sincerity that he or she had never rebelled against God, could effect such reconciliation. This Servant is just such a person (see John 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:21)” (Oswalt 1998: 397).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What did John the Baptist mean when he declared about Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36)? Where did he get this understanding?

How is Jesus’ submission to suffering a model for us to follow? After reflection, read Peter’s words in 1 Peter 2:18-25.

Reflect upon the various ways in which Jesus fulfilled this stanza. Additional NT passages to consider include Matt 26:63; 27:12-14; Luke 23:9; John 19:9-11; Acts 8:32-33; Rom 4:25; 2 Cor 5:21; Rev 5:6.

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ISAIAH 53:7-9: THE DEATH OF THE SERVANT

OUTLINE OF THE FOURTH SERVANT SONG (52:13-53:12)

A The **paradox** of the servant (52:13-15)

B The **rejection** of the servant (53:1-3)

C The **sacrifice** of the servant (53:4-6)

B The **death** of the servant (53:7-9)

A The **triumph** of the servant (53:10-12)

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 53:7-9

The Servant’s submission to death (53:7)

Led out to die

The Servant’s death on behalf of others (53:8)

Executed

The Servant’s innocence and mysterious burial (53:9)

Buried

NOTES

“In Isaiah 53, and particularly in verses 7–9, Old Testament and biblical soteriology reaches its climax” (Motyer 1993: 433).

“This stanza emphasizes three elements: the Servant’s submissiveness, his innocence, and the injustice of what was done to him” (Oswalt 1998: 391).

“It is significant that the only extended metaphor in the poem deals with sheep, the animals of sacrifice” (Oswalt 2003: 585).

“All the references in the New Testament to the Lamb of God . . . *spring from this passage in the book of Isaiah*” (Delitzsch, cited by Baron 2000: 101).

There’s a shift here from the “we all, like sheep” to the Servant who is “like a lamb...as a sheep.” The Servant is from among the sheep, and he is a sheep, but unlike the others, he has done no violence and no deceit in his mouth and the judgment that he suffered was for the sin of the people. Thus, from the sheep comes the Sheep who suffers for the sheep.

THE SERVANT’S SUBMISSIVENESS TO DEATH (53:7)/LED OUT TO DIE

“The victim’s silence . . . springs from love and faith, as Jesus was to show (1 Pet. 2:23–24), not from weakness or prudence” (Kidner).

“Animals go as uncomprehending to slaughter as to shearing, but the Servant who knew all things beforehand (John 18:4) went to his death with a calm silence that reflected not an uncomprehending but a submitted mind and tongue” (Motyer 1999: 379).

“Animals can only picture the substitute we require and cannot actually be that substitute: they have no consciousness of what is afoot nor of any deliberate, personal, self-submissive consent to it. Ultimately only a Person can substitute for people. This is the importance of the stress in verse 7 on the Servant’s voluntariness expressed in the acceptance of humiliation and the deliberately maintained silence” (Motyer 1999: 379).

“It is not that the Servant did not deserve to die (for that is implicit in verses 4–6) but that though he did not deserve to die he was willing to do so” (Motyer 1993: 433).

THE SERVANT’S DEATH ON BEHALF OF OTHERS (53:8)/EXECUTED

“We now come to perhaps the most difficult verse in this great prophecy” (Baron 2000: 101).

“These ‘frequent repetitions,’ as Dr. Alexander observes, so far from being rhetorical defects, or indications of another author, are used with an obvious design, namely, that of making it impossible for any ingenuity or learning to eliminate the doctrine of vicarious atonement from this passage by presenting it so often, and in forms so varied and yet still the same, that he who succeeds in expelling it from one place is compelled to meet it in another. Thus in this verse, which fills up the last particulars of the humiliation and sufferings of the Messiah even unto death, it is once again repeated that it was ‘*for the transgression of My people*’ that the stroke fell upon Him” (Baron 2000: 108).

THE SERVANT’S INNOCENCE AND MYSTERIOUS BURIAL (53:9)/BURIED

“Not only has he done nothing worthy of the death to which he is brought (v. 9); he is actually receiving the treatment someone else (*my people*) deserved (v. 8). What can be the purpose in such a double injustice? Is this not merely one of life’s “bad jokes” in which the wrong people win and the right people lose? Or is there here a key to the triumph over all those bad jokes? The answer to these questions is not given here, nor is the purpose of the suffering detailed here; we must wait until the next stanza for that” (Oswalt 1998: 391).

“*Wicked ... rich*: the former is plural and the latter singular. If Isaiah had merely intended the contrast between a shameful and a sumptuous burial he would have used two singulars. The use of a plural and a singular suggests that he is talking not about categories but about actual individuals. He offers no explanation, nor is there one until the fulfilment: Matthew alone of the Gospels specifies that Joseph of Arimathea was ‘rich’ (27:37; cf. Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50); John brings out the contrast between the expected (19:31) and the actual (19:38ff.) burial of Jesus” (Motyer 1999: 380).

“And this ‘remarkable coincidence’ is truly wonderful, for, in the words of Delitzsch, ‘if we reflect that the Jewish rulers would have given to Jesus the same dishonourable burial as to the two thieves, but that the Roman authorities handed over the body to Joseph the Arimathean, a ‘rich man’