

Main Idea: When Jesus died He exhibited and experienced three things, as revealed in Isaiah 53:7-9.

- I. In His death we see submission (7).
 - A. Here's what happened to Him.
 1. He was oppressed.
 2. He was afflicted.
 3. He was led to His death.
 - B. Here's how He responded.
 1. He didn't protest.
 2. He accepted the injustice.
 - II. In His death we see separation (8).
 - A. Here's what happened to Him.
 1. He was taken away.
 2. He was cut off.
 - B. Here's what it meant for Him.
 1. He died alone.
 2. He died for the sin of others.
 - III. In His death we see sadness (9).
 - A. He was treated with disdain.
 1. They intended to bury Him with the wicked.
 2. They ended up burying Him with the rich.
 - B. He deserves to be treated with devotion.
 1. He didn't get what He deserved.
 2. He got what we deserve.
- Make It Personal: How should we respond to the death of Jesus?
1. We must accept His sacrifice.
 2. We must follow His example.
 3. We must proclaim His accomplishment.

John Wesley preached his last sermon of Feb 17, 1791, in Lambeth on the text "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isa 55:6). The following day, a very sick man, he was put to bed in his home on City Road. During the days of his illness, he often repeated the words from one of his brother's hymns: I the chief of sinners am, But Jesus died for me! His last words were, "The best of all is, God is with us!" He died March 2, 1791.¹

How a person dies often reveals a lot about a person. It's especially interesting to consider the words that come from their lips as they prepare to leave the earth.

When Martin Luther came to the end of his life, it is said that his final words were, "Our God is the God from whom cometh salvation: God is the Lord by whom we escape death." For John Knox it was, "Live in Christ, live in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death." When John Calvin came to his moment of parting he is said to have prayed, "Thou, Lord, bruise me; but I am abundantly satisfied, since it is from Thy hand." As Charles Wesley prepared to leave this world, he uttered, "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness--satisfied, satisfied!"

Yes, a person's parting words are often indicative and highly significant.

This morning we're going to ponder how Jesus died. In the past two weeks we've been *Gazing at the Suffering Servant* in the prophecy of Isaiah 53. It's intriguing that from Isaiah's perspective, what made the Messiah's death so astounding isn't what He

*** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ W. Wiersbe, *Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers*, p. 245.

said. It's what He *didn't* say, for as we'll see in Isaiah 53:7-9, He was *silent to the last breath*.

C.H. Spurgeon, the well known Baptist preacher in London a century ago, attracted such huge crowds that they constructed a large, new facility to accommodate the assembly. It's recorded that the following were some of Spurgeon's first words spoken from the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle:

"I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshipers, shall be the *person of Jesus Christ*. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist; I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist; but if I am asked what is my creed, I reply, 'It is Jesus Christ.' My venerated predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a [theological heritage] admirable and excellent in its way. But the [legacy] to which I would pin and bind myself forever, God helping me,...is Jesus Christ, who is the arm and substance of the gospel, who is in Himself all theology, the incarnation of every precious truth."

I say to you, brothers and sisters at WBC, may that be said of us. The subject of the ministry of this house shall be the *person of Jesus Christ*.

We're going to invite Isaiah the prophet to teach us about the Savior, namely, about how He died. If Jesus' life was unique—and it was for He lived a perfect life—surely His death puts Him in a category all by Himself. How so? According to Isaiah 53:7-9, when Jesus died He exhibited and experienced three things.

I. In His death we see submission (7).

"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

In the eighth century B.C., Isaiah predicted that the Messiah was coming. His prophecy, recorded in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, is comprised of five sections of three verses each. In section one (52:13-15) Isaiah described the *honor* of The Servant. In section five (53:10-12) he again returns to the theme of the Messiah's *honor*. But in between, in sections two, three, and four, Isaiah describes in vivid language the *humiliation* of the Messiah. He would be the *Suffering Servant*.

He begins the fifty-third chapter, in verses 1-3, with a portrayal of how the Messiah would be treated. "He was despised and rejected by men (3)," he writes. Next in verses 4-6 the prophet tells us *why* the Messiah endured such treatment—it was for "our transgressions" and for "our iniquities," as we saw last time.

But in the section before us today, verses 7-9, Isaiah depicts how He *died*. What stands out first about His death? In His death we see *submission*.

If you take a pen and circle the verbs in this section, you'll quickly notice something. It's full of *passive* verbs, that is, verbs that communicate activity performed by someone else against the Savior. He *was oppressed*. He *was afflicted*. He *was led*. He *was taken away*. He *was cut off*. He *was stricken*. He *was assigned* a grave. These aren't activities the Messiah did. These are activities that others did against Him.

Let's take a closer look...

A. Here's what happened to Him. Ponder the first three verbs, as stated in verse 7.

1. *He was oppressed*. The Hebrew term means "to press, to drive, to exact, or to treat harshly." We live in a world full of oppression, where people are forced to do and endure things against their will.

In many Middle-Eastern countries women are often treated like property. In North Korea believers can't meet publicly to worship Jesus. Yes, all around the world people are being *oppressed*. Isaiah says the Messiah was oppressed.

2. *He was afflicted.* The word means "to be bowed down, to put down, to become low." Again, this was done to Jesus. How so? He was ridiculed by Jewish leaders, mocked by civil authorities, and then scourged by Roman soldiers. They smashed a thorny crown on His head. They forced Him to carry His own cross through the streets in public humiliation. They drove rusty nails through His hands and feet. Yes, He was afflicted. And then...

3. *He was led to His death.* Isaiah says, "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter." Which raises a question. What's true of a lamb being taken to slaughter? It's helpless. It's defenseless. It may be aware that danger is coming, but it's powerless to stop it.

Isaiah says that Jesus experienced that. Though He did have the power to stop it, He was like a lamb heading for the altar.

In addition, Isaiah says He was like a sheep before her shearers. What part does a sheep have in the shearing process? The sheep doesn't clip its own wool. The act of shearing is done to it. Once again, the emphasis is passive.

Interestingly, in verse 6 Isaiah says *we* are like sheep, for we are wayward. We're prone to go our own way and get lost in the process. But in verse 7 he says the Messiah is like a sheep, not because He is wayward for He certainly is not. The Messiah is like a sheep in that He became defenseless.

Psalms 22:12-18 speaks of the unjust treatment to which He subjected Himself: "Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. ¹³ Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

That's what happened to The Servant. He was oppressed, afflicted, and led to death.

B. Here's how He responded. Isaiah highlights His twofold response.

1. *He didn't protest.* "He did not open His mouth," the text says. In fact, Isaiah repeats that statement twice in verse 7. Though subjected to horrendous treatment, *He did not open His mouth!* He didn't scream, "Stop the oppression! It's not fair!" He didn't call on His Father, "God, please intervene!"

He could have. He could have called 10,000 angels—as the song says. And who could have blamed Him had He opened His mouth and objected to such abuse? It would have been a natural reaction.

But Jesus never reacted. He *responded*—with intention and purpose. When He experienced the mistreatment of wicked men, He didn't protest. In positive terms...

2. *He accepted the injustice.* The Israelites were well aware of the submissive nature of sheep. That's how Jesus died. He quietly submitted to His death. Philippians 2:8 says, "He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

I've never shorn sheep. I have sat in the barber's chair, and I learned early on as a child a simple lesson that makes the experience more pleasurable. When a person is coming at you with sharp scissors, it's best to be quiet and sit still. It's almost instinctive.

Here's how verse 7 reads in the *New Century Version*, "He was quiet, as a sheep is quiet while its wool is being cut."

In the New Testament, all four gospel writers emphasize Jesus' silence:

Matthew 27:12-14 "When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, *he gave no answer.* ¹³ Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" ¹⁴ But *Jesus made no reply*, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor."

Mark 14:60-61 "Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" ⁶¹ But *Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.* Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

Luke 23:8-9 "When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. ⁹ He plied him with many questions, but *Jesus gave him no answer.*"

John 19:8-11 "When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, ⁹ and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but *Jesus gave him no answer.* ¹⁰ "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" ¹¹ Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

Have you ever wondered, "Why didn't Jesus say something? Why didn't He defend Himself before Pilate, Herod, and the rest?" If we're honest, we would have, and we do. When people slight us or hurt us or injure us, we make noise. We insist we have a right to make noise, and that it's the right thing to do in the face of such injustice.

But He didn't. He certainly could have. He was innocent, something Isaiah will make perfectly clear in verse 9. So if He had no guilt, why the silence?

Here's the reason. There was guilt, but it wasn't His guilt. It was *ours*. John Calvin explains, "This was the reason of his silence at the judgment seat of Pilate, though he had a just defense to offer; for, having become answerable for our guilt, he wished to submit silently to the sentence, that we might loudly glory in the righteousness of faith obtained through free grace."²

He did not open His mouth. He in no way tried to stop the crime. To the contrary, He invited it and submitted Himself to it. In His death, we see submission.

II. In His death we see separation (8).

"By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken."

In what sense did Jesus experience *separation* in His death? Isaiah tells us in verse 8.

A. Here's what happened to Him. The prophet utilizes two more passive verbs.

1. He was taken away. The term signifies the act of taking life. It can be translated "to take away so as to deprive," or even "to take away life." The KJV puts it this way, "He was taken from prison and from judgment."

² John Calvin, *Isaiah*, Vol. 4, p. 119.

That's what happened to Jesus. After a rigged trial He was escorted by Roman soldiers—in reality, he was *taken away*—to be killed on a hill called Golgotha outside the city of Jerusalem. In addition...

2. *He was cut off*. Specifically, “He was cut off from the land of the living.” The Hebrew word is revealing. Elsewhere it refers to cutting something in two. It's the word used to depict the parting of the Red Sea in Moses' day.

Symbolically, to be “cut off” means to be *excluded from* or *separated from* something. It's what happened to a leper. A leper was not allowed to rub shoulders with people in society. He was ostracized. He was isolated. He was *cut off* from society.

That's what Isaiah said would happen to the Messiah. And that's exactly what did happen to Jesus. He was taken away and cut off. He experienced ultimate *separation*.

But why? And how did it affect Him? Isaiah tells us.

B. Here's what it meant for Him. Notice the question Isaiah poses in verse 8, “By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants?” “Who shall declare his generation?” is how the KJV renders it.

Why does Isaiah raise that question? Just who are “his descendants,” and why can't they be “spoken of?” The point seems to be this. When The Servant died...

1. *He died alone*. Jesus never married, and thus had no biological children to carry on his name. He truly died *alone*.

It's a terrible thing to be alone—I mean *all alone*. But know this. No one has ever experienced *aloneness* like Jesus did. Remember His cry from the cross? “My God, my God, why have you *forsaken Me*?”

Think about those verbs again. He was “taken away” and “cut off.” Those terms speak not only of a death that was violent and premature—which Jesus' death certainly was—but also of the judgment of God.³ Why did He die alone? Isaiah tells us why...

2. *He died for the sin of others*. Verse 8 concludes, “For the transgression of my people he was stricken.” Why was He stricken? He died, Isaiah says, *for the transgression of my people*. He died vicariously. He died a substitutionary death.

When Jesus died, a transfer occurred. God placed on His own Son the transgressions of His people. Though Jesus had committed no sin, God treated Him as though He had. He died *for our transgressions*, and God judged Him with the penalty we had coming to us. That's why He died alone.

Do you know what hell is? It's a real place of torment where people will be *alone forever*, totally cut off from God and each other. That's what Jesus endured. The fact is, He died *alone* so that we would never have to be alone again! In His death He experienced *separation*. But there's more...

III. In His death we see sadness (9).

“He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.”

There's incredible sadness in these words. He whom angel hosts adore was not only sentenced unjustly, and treated mercilessly, and killed brutally, but beyond that was subjected to injustice in His burial. In short...

A. He was treated with disdain. According to Isaiah's prediction...

³ G. Grogan, *Isaiah*, p. 303.

1. *They intended to bury Him with the wicked.* “He made his grave with the wicked,” is how the KJV puts it. The NIV states, “He was assigned a grave with the wicked.”

In the first century, the bodies of executed criminals were sometimes thrown into the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) on the outskirts of Jerusalem to burn. But that didn’t happen to Jesus. Rather than being tossed on a trash heap, His body was *buried*, just like Isaiah predicted.

But wait. Buried with whom? Though they intended to bury Him with the wicked...

2. *They ended up burying Him with the rich.* It’s somewhat of a sidelight, but worth mentioning at this point. The *rich* die, too, don’t they? You can have a bank account of a billion dollars, but you can’t escape this. You will die, and there’s no buying your way out of the scheduled appointment.

In Isaiah’s prediction, though Jesus was assigned a grave with the wicked—perhaps He was supposed to be buried with the other two criminals—they ended up burying Him with the rich.

There’s an interesting feature in the Hebrew text, as Herbert Wolf explains: “The word ‘wicked’ is plural (which fits the two thieves who died with Christ), but the word ‘rich’ is singular. This is an unexpected change in number because the words are in parallel lines. An interesting confirmation of the change from plural to singular is seen in the Saint Mark’s Isaiah Scroll, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scribe started to write the plural form of the word ‘rich,’ *‘asirim*, realized that he made a mistake, and scratched out the last two letters, leaving the singular *‘asir*.”⁴

Warren Wiersbe remarks, “Verse 9 should read: ‘And they appointed His grave with the wicked, yet He was with a rich man in His death.’ Were it not for Nicodemus and Joseph, the body of Jesus would have been buried in a “potter’s field” or thrown on a garbage heap.”⁵

Do you see the sadness in all of this? He was *assigned* a grave. Though He is the author of life, He subjected Himself to others who took His life and the decided where He would be buried, just as Isaiah predicted. He was treated with *disdain*. And what makes it even worse is the fact that...

B. He deserves to be treated with devotion. Notice the end of verse 9, “He was assigned a grave...though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.”

In other words, He was sinless. He didn’t deserve this. After the perfect life He lived, He deserved honor and respect.

Hebrews 4:15 tells us, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—*yet was without sin*.” The apostle John makes the same point in 1 John 3:5, “But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. *And in him is no sin*.”

But though He is without sin...

1. *He didn’t get what He deserved.* Instead...

2. *He got what we deserve.*

My friend, because of His perfect life and death as our substitute, Jesus deserves to be treated with devotion. He deserves *your* devotion and mine. Does He have it? It’s so easy to *say* He does, but the proof is in our actions.

⁴ Herbert Wolf, *Interpreting Isaiah*, p. 275.

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*, (Victor Books: Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament) Wheaton, Illinois.

Take the Moravians, for example.⁶ The Moravian Church began over five hundred years ago in what is the modern day Czech Republic. The seal of their church contains a picture of a lamb with these words, "Our Lamb has conquered. Let us follow Him."

And that's what they have done. Since He died for them, they were willing to die for Him. I read about some Moravian believers who went to Africa back in the eighteenth century and found a leper colony secluded inside of a set of huge walls. There was only one gate, and once a person went in, he never came out. Two Moravians looked over the wall and saw two men, one whose arms had rotted off who was carrying the other, whose legs were gone. The two lepers were working together to make holes in the ground to plant seeds.

The sight broke the hearts of the two Moravians. They saw people who were not only suffering from a terrible disease, but also dying by the hundreds and entering eternal suffering without Christ. *We must take the gospel to them*, they concluded. And so they went through the gate, knowing they would never leave until they too died of leprosy. That's devotion. Being willing to die for the love of Jesus.

Other Moravians went to the West Indies. Why? Because there were slaves there who needed to hear about Christ. But it was illegal to preach to the slaves unless the preacher was a slave. So they sold themselves into slavery, and worked and toiled in the fields to earn the opportunity to tell their fellow slaves about the One who died so they could be free from sin.

You say, "Those men were foolish. You don't have to go to such extremes to show Jesus you love Him."

Really? How do you show the One who died in your place and endured the hell you had coming to you that you appreciate Him? Isn't He worth our all? Doesn't He deserve our absolute devotion, no matter what the cost?

As we've gazed at Jesus' death this morning, we've seen three things. We've seen *submission*—He subjected Himself to horrid abuse. We've seen *separation*—He experienced aloneness so we can enjoy God's fellowship. And we've seen *sadness*—He didn't get what He deserved, but what we deserve.

Make It Personal: How should we respond to the death of Jesus?

In responding to Jesus' death we must do three things...

1. *We must accept His sacrifice.* To benefit from Jesus' sacrifice, you must believe in the Lord Jesus. He who died on the cross triumphed over the grave three days later and gives forgiveness and eternal life to all who call upon Him. But you must *call*. You must repent of your sins and accept His sacrifice. You must accept *Him*.

There's a fictitious story about a meeting the devil had with his cohorts to devise a plan to get people to reject the Gospel. "Let's go to them and say there is no God," proposed one. Silence prevailed. Every devil knew that most people believe in a supreme being.

"Let's tell them there is no hell, no future punishment for the wicked," offered another. That was turned down, because men obviously have consciences which tell them that sin must be punished.

The concave was going to end in failure when there came a voice from the rear: "Tell them there is a God, there is a hell and that the Bible is the Word of God. But tell them

⁶ I'm indebted to Spurgeon for these illustrations. *Twelve Sermons on the Passion and Death of Christ*, p. 90.

there is plenty of time to decide the question. Let them 'neglect' the Gospel, until it is too late." All hell erupted with ghoulish glee, for they knew that if a person procrastinated on Christ, they usually never accept Him.⁷

Have you *accepted* the sacrifice of Jesus? Oswald Chambers is right, "We trample the blood of the Son of God if we think we are forgiven because we are sorry for our sins. The only explanation for the forgiveness of God and for the unfathomable depth of His forgetting is the death of Jesus Christ. Our repentance is merely the outcome of our personal realization of the atonement which He has worked out for us. It does not matter who or what we are; there is absolute reinstatement into God by the death of Jesus Christ and by no other way, not because Jesus Christ pleads, but because He died. It is not earned, but accepted. All the pleading which deliberately refuses to recognize the Cross is of no avail; it is battering at a door other than the one that Jesus has opened. Our Lord does not pretend we are all right when we are all wrong. The atonement is a propitiation whereby God, through the death of Jesus, makes an unholy man holy."

Friend, do you want to be right with God? Then you must *accept* His sacrifice.

2. *We must follow His example.* In 1 Peter 2:20-22, Peter quotes Isaiah 53:9 and applies Jesus' example to us. There Peter encourages believers who were suffering unjustly by reminding them what the Savior did:

"But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.
²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'"

If you want to live a life that pleases God, you must be willing to follow Jesus' example. You must be willing to suffer injustice without retaliating. You must reject the world's notion of responding to evil with evil.

Are you willing? Are you following Jesus' example in the way you treat your family members? How about your boss or the person who wrongs you at work?

Will you join the Moravians today? If we had the spirit of the Moravians in our midst, what great things could happen for our Savior in Wheelersburg and beyond!

Which brings me to one other response. Having learned what happened when Jesus died, we must accept His sacrifice. We must follow His example. And...

3. *We must proclaim His accomplishment.* We need to get the word out! There is a Redeemer, a Savior, and the world needs to hear of Him! Will you resolve to proclaim His accomplishment?

⁷ Resource, July/August, 1990.