

July 17

Isaiah 51, 52, 53, 54

Hi again. My name is Terry Ebers & today we are continuing our journey through the book of Isaiah. Today is July 17th & you read Isaiah chapters 51, 52, 53, & the first part of 54.

Well today we read what may be known as the greatest of the servant songs. The suffering servant we read about is Jesus Christ. Some have said that Isaiah 53 stands as the most remarkable and specific pieces of Messianic prophecy in the whole Old Testament. The fact that this chapter exists (written more than 700 years before its fulfillment) is one of the strongest arguments we could find as evidence toward the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

Now, as we've already noted, this passage is significant because of its prophetic nature. The Prophecy of Jesus is obvious because of its specific & accurate. Chapter 53:9 says..."he was assigned a grave with the wicked." You probably remember that Jesus was crucified on a cross between two criminals. Verse 9 goes on to say..."And with the rich in His death." Christ was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. This was a wealthy man who donated his own prepared tomb for the burial of Jesus. It all fits – it's remarkable prophecy!

We learn three important things about Jesus' death from this passage. And they all just happen to start with the letter "V." The first is...Jesus' death was voluntary. The servant of Isaiah 53 voluntarily accepts the rejection, the blows, the suffering and the death that comes. He accepts it all voluntarily or else He would not have accepted it silently. He is the suffering servant because He chooses to be. What happened to Jesus did not take Him by surprise. He knew the prophecies in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. He predicted His own death. It wasn't an unplanned accident, or a terrible twist of fate. When Jesus walked up to Jerusalem that last Passover He told the disciples, "I'm going there to die." He chose death so we could have life. His death was voluntary.

Next, Jesus' death was vicarious. The other word for vicarious is "substitutionary." That is why you sometimes might hear the phrase "substitutionary atonement." He died for us. That's why He is called a lamb led to the slaughter. In the religion of ancient Israel you sacrificed the lamb in your place. It died so you wouldn't have to. Jesus is the Lamb of God. When we read the gospel of John and hear John the Baptist calling Jesus the Lamb of God we will remember the teaching of Isaiah 53 and realize that John understood at that point what was really going on here. When Jesus died He bore our sins. He died in our place. That's the heart of the gospel. Jesus death was vicarious.

Finally, Jesus' death was victorious. The sacrifice was accepted. The atonement was effective and the proof was the resurrection. Voluntary, vicarious, victorious. Hopefully that will help you remember the three important things we learn about Jesus death from Isaiah 53.

Now there's a couple more things I want to touch on today & one of them has to do with the idea of healing. In verse 4 of the 53rd chapter, it says He took on Himself not only our sins but our infirmities or sicknesses as well. Now, in Matthew chapter 8, in a passage describing Jesus' healing ministry, Matthew wrote out..."This was done to fulfill the scripture..." and then he quoted Isaiah 53:14. So, it clearly means that Christ's death not only released the power to forgive our sins but also to heal our diseases and that is why we believe in divine healing and why we pray and ask Christ to heal people that are sick. Now, It doesn't mean that every time we ask for healing we will get it, but it does show that God's concern for us is more than just for the spiritual part. He cares about our bodies too and we can pray about sickness, injury and disease.

And the last thing I want to mention today is the idea of servant hood. We are called to be servants just like Jesus and if we pay attention to that call it will mean: 1) submitting ourselves to the will of God. That isn't always easy to do. 2) It will also mean suffering. You cannot be a servant of God without risking (and experiencing) suffering. It comes with the territory. "Don't expect" Jesus said, "that you will be treated any differently than they treated Me - a servant is not greater than his master." Finally being a servant also means living for others instead of for ourselves. This is the one that I probably forget the most, but it too, is part of the job description of a servant. He or she lives for others. Jesus did. So must we.

Well as you go about your day, may you be a servant...living for others instead of yourself, and may you be reminded that Jesus did the same for us. Have a great day!