

Isaiah 53 Part 6: Isaiah 53:7,8

Last week, from Isaiah 53:3 – 7, we learned that Jesus went through immense, unspeakable pain – more pain than displayed in Roman Catholic paintings and statues – more pain than displayed in Hollywood Jesus movies – more pain than our wildest imagination.

What is shocking, and oftentimes misunderstood, is that Jesus was willing to go through more suffering than any man in history.

When I say Jesus was willing to go through agonizing pain, am I saying Jesus was a lover of pain?
Like a masochist – a person who derives pleasure in self-inflicted pain? No!

Do you remember in the Garden of Gethsemane -- as he agonized over the looming, torturous death that awaited him on the horizon – Jesus suffered from **hematohidrosis?**

Hematohidrosis is a rare condition in which the capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to exude blood, occurs under extreme emotional stress.

Hematohidrosis is a medical term so it is fitting that out of the 4 gospel writers, Luke -- the physician -- describes the symptoms of this condition.

Jesus is sweating blood hours before his crucifixion. He agonizes over his imminent suffering and death and so cries out to His father,

“Abba, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me.

Yet not my will, but your will be done.”

You can tell he doesn't want to go to the cross. However, in another passage, Jesus says, he was willing to go to the cross,

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. John 10:18

So was Jesus willing or not willing to die on the cross?

Is there a contradiction in the Bible?

No, not at all.

You see, Jesus actually has two wills here.

And these two wills of Christ, attest to the Trinity.

We, who believe in the Trinity, know that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man – He has two natures:

Because he is both God and man, he has 2 wills:

- 1) The will, as a human being, to avoid pain and suffering and
- 2) the will of God to rescue us from our iniquities, from our sins.

If you remember from the sermon last week, Jesus suffered because of our sin.

According to the Bible,

No one is righteous, no one does good, not even one -- all have sinned. This hard truth is mentioned in Psalms 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3; Isaiah 59:16 and Romans 3:10-12,

Sinning is disobeying God's Law.

All of us have disobeyed the law,

And, unfortunately, there are curses attached to disobedience.

Praise God, however,

that Christ became the curse in our stead to redeem us from sin.

In Galatians 3:13 it says,

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written,

"Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"

Why does the Galatians 3:13 say Jesus was hanged on a tree – and not a cross?

Deut 21:22,23 also mentions tree rather than cross,

And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,
... for a hanged man is cursed by God.

To answer the question, why tree?
we need to go to the original language of the New Testament – Koine Greek.

There are three words that are important in answering this question:
“cross”, “tree”, and “wood”.

The Greek word used for “cross” is *σταυρός* *stauros*, which occurs 27 times in the New Testament means “stake, pole, upright post or cross.”

However, other scriptures record that Christ was nailed to a tree

Tree in the Greek is *δένδρα* [*dendra*] and it occurs 25 times in in the New Testament:

Now comes the third word... Wood:

The word “wood” *ξύλον* [*ksoolon*] occurs a total of 20 times in the New Testament.

The Greek word for wood is also used of the cross.

By looking at the Koine Greek,
it becomes clear why sometimes the cross is called a tree.
The authors were not really calling the cross, a literal tree;
they were just using the word “wood” interchangeably with the word for
“cross” and “tree.”

Eg.,

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

1 Peter 2:24.

“cross” – here literally translated from the Greek is “wood”
So if we were to translate this wooden literally – no pun intended,
it would translate,
He himself bore our sins in his body on the wood.

“Wood” is actually very important to Protestant churches
Have you noticed, there is always wood in Protestant churches?

Everyone, take a look around the sanctuary –
You will notice something.

Other than wood,
you’ll notice we an absence of many objects that other -- non-Protestant --
places of worship have.

Look around you.
Do you see any **Temple Items and Furnishing?**
**Curtains or an altar, a gold-incense altar or an altar of burnt offering or a
brass laver for washing or a menorah?**

Why do we not have these objects in our church?
The reason is that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Temple.

Jesus is the greater temple, so we Protestants,
when it comes to proper Biblical worship,
we should never, ever go back to the temple with its furniture, objects and
obsolete rituals.

In fact,
Hebrews repeatedly warned the Judaizing Christians of the 1st century -
don’t go back to the temple or it’s practices!
Go to Christ and stay there!

Now, look around our church sanctuary again.
Do you see **Icons, Statues, and Pictures of saints, Mary, and Jesus on a
cross?**

You see, we are not like RC that create and pray and bow to and kiss
objects of stone or metal or images created by the hands of men.

We do NOT give **Popes, Church Councils or Rabbis** the authority to tell us it is okay to bow down to, or pray to or kiss, or revere stone, metal objects made by the hands of men, for it is clearly against God's commandments.

Some of you know that I have studied the archaeology of Israel in the first century, and from the archaeological record, Christians, as well as Jews (including Jesus himself), clearly opposed the making of, as well as the veneration of, life-like images, statues, relics and icons.

We Protestants must be committed to obeying God's commandments, even if our leaders say otherwise.

For us Protestants, God's word has the final authority – not Roman Catholic Popes and Councils, not rabbis, nor traditions, not even our imagination nor our creativity.

We must worship God the way He commands us to worship him. God commands us in the 2nd Commandment –

Worship the Right God the Right way:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth ... You shall not worship them ...; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,... Exodus 20:4,5

This commandment is repeated in Deuteronomy 4,

We are not free to worship according to our own imagination, invention, or devices.

... do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female ... Deuteronomy 4:16-18

God's word is our final authority – and regulates the way we worship Him. And that is why the Protestant Reformers – knowing that God is a jealous God and that human beings are inclined to idolatry – tried to reform the church – they did away with idolatrous images and objects in the church because

they knew from our track record,
we would be tempted to worship them.

To this end,
the Protestant Reformers made our place of worship, simple.

Simple meaning without ornamentations, adornments, and unnecessary objects.

They attempted to make church a suitable place of worship, where worshippers can properly worship the invisible God in Spirit (that is, worship God everywhere and anywhere) and in Truth (that is, worship God through Christ and His Word).

John Knox, one of the main fathers of Scotland's Protestant Reformation and of our denomination -- Presbyterianism, provides a description of an appropriate place of worship:

He says that the facility and furnishings should be such that they reflect the "majesty of the word of God."

Hence, a proper church should have a pulpit, a basin for baptism, and a table to administrate the Lord's Supper.

Of the three objects/furnishings, do you know which is placed in the centre on the rostrum?

In traditional Protestant Reformation churches, it is the pulpit.

Why the Pulpit?

The pulpit signifies the preaching of the Gospel.

The Word of God is the supreme authority for the Protestant.

So the pulpit has a central place in the worship of Protestantism.

And that central place of preaching is signified by the pulpit placed in the center of the rostrum.

The Roman Catholics do not put the pulpit in the center but on the sides – implying that in RC churches Scripture and sermon preaching is subordinate and peripheral.

Now, this gets me back to wood.

What is made of wood in Protestant churches?
Anyone?

It's the pulpit.

Now unfortunately, my point doesn't work well at this church because the pulpit here is made out of acrylic – the modern church has chosen to go with artificial material rather than natural wood.

And so, because I despise the new, the contemporary trends in the church, I brought some wood from home and I deliberately put it at the center – so that we can at least have some wood at the pulpit.

So after I give you a little bit of a hint here, let me ask you why did all the reformed protestant churches always have a wooden pulpit at the center?

Because wood is linked to tree,
and a tree is linked to the cross,
and the cross is linked to – the message of salvation – the Gospel.

You see, the centrality of the wooden pulpit signifies the preaching of the cross is the most important thing – in church.

Listen to what Paul says about **Preaching the Cross**,

... Christ [sent] me to ... preach the gospel ...

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Cor. 1:17,18

So we Protestants come to church to hear the message of the cross, **nothing else but the message of Christ crucified from the pulpit.**

For I [Paul] determined not to know nothing else ... except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1-2)

Jesus dying on a cross,
on a tree,
on wood as a sacrifice to take away the sins of sinners like you and me –
Paul preached nothing else.

Historically in Protestant churches, on traditional wooden pulpit,
a huge Bible was actually locked onto the pulpit,
signifying that from the pulpit the word of God was preached.

So the takeaway,
the preacher, from the pulpit,
preaches the cross – the Gospel -- from the word of God.

Now let us go to **Isaiah 53: 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.

Even though Jesus was innocent,
even though he would suffer and be oppressed and afflicted,
he did not open his mouth –
he did not cry out in resistance,
nor did he plead his innocence.
No, he was silent.
You can tell, Jesus was no ordinary man.

The reason is that ordinary people -- when they suffering – are never silent.
They make a fuss of their suffering.
They make sure everyone knows.
Hey I'm suffering here.

And we say, "Ouch!"
As we get older,
we groan about our pain more frequently.
Oh, my back.
Oh my neck,
Oh, my leg.
Sound familiar?

It's funny,
whenever I go into a restroom
at a subway station,
there is almost always an old man at the urinal moaning 아이구 아이구

As I stand at the urinal -- looking forward – men always look straight ahead
– it's protocol.

That old man standing next to me at the urinal will moan 아이구 아이구.
And usually I feel sorry for the old man.

To my embarrassment, I found out recently that I did the same thing at
home.

I didn't know I moaned like an old man in the toilet until a few days ago:
my wife overheard me while I was sitting in the bathroom.

I was struggling so I moaned,
“Oh man!” “Oh man!”

I had no idea I did this.

I guess my wife thought it was funny because when I came out of the
bathroom,

she had this awkward grin on her face.

She playfully imitated me and groaned, “Oppa, I can hear you moan, Oh
man! ... Oh man!”

I laughed blushing. But to be honest,

I realized that I was just like that old man moaning in pain in the toilet in
the subway station!

Now Jesus, on the other hands, is not like us.

Although his suffering was a million times more painful than the pain we
experience in the bathroom, he was silent,
he did not open his mouth.

And that's quite remarkable!

During his trial, he remained silent.

On the way to the cross – as he was led like a lamb to the slaughter – he
remained silent.

During his scourging, he did not complain.

He endured the cross, scorning its shame,

yet did not open his mouth in resistance till the very end.

Take a look at this poor man.

And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place of a Skull*, which is called in Aramaic, Golgotha. John 19:17

Notice the two types of crosses.

One of these two types of cross was probably what Jesus was crucified on.

1) The Tau cross, 19th letter of the Greek alphabet.

Or

2) The Latin cross

So Jesus probably did not die on an actual tree.

He obviously did not carry a tree on his shoulders up to Skull Hill, Golgotha.

He most likely carried wooden crossbar called a patibulum.
50 kg.

The cross most heinous, painful way to die invented by mankind.
Perfecting by the Romans.

It was so painful,
they didn't have a vocabulary word to encapsulate the degree of suffering and pain of the victim,
so they invented a new word in Latin:

Crux

Where we get, which word?

Which word in English is derived from Crux

Crucifixion

Josephus, Jewish first century historian.

witnessed many crucifixions.

War of the Jews

"The most heinous of deaths"

Now, take a look at the Sign at the top of the Cross:

דִּישׁוּעַ הַנְּצֻרִי מֶלֶךְ הַיְהוּדִי

[Yeshua Hanotzri V'melekh Hai yih hudim]

Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum

[Yezus Nazarenus rrex ee yu day oh room]

Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων

[basileus ton You Die Own]

Do you know what a Lingua Franca is?

It's a language used by many groups of people to communicate with each other.

Can anyone think of a modern-day lingua franca?

Some examples would be English or French or Spanish or Swahili.

It's ironic that this sign made to mock and deride -- unwittingly -- became to the Jews a public declaration that this bumpkin from a small, humble village in Nazareth is the King of the Jews, the Lion of Judah, the Prophesied eternal King from the line of David, the promised Messiah that would crush the head of the serpent. Little did the Gentiles know that this sign was a public announcement to the world that this man who is suffering on the cross is actually the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

It's ironic that here at the cross, at the humiliation and the suffering and the death of the Savior, lies the greatest story of all, the climax of God's story of salvation.

It's ironic because no man at that time would've guessed.

Only God could've thought up this story.

And, in this story, this true story, human beings contribute their sin and the killing of the innocent Son of God on the cross.

It's ironic: God involves all of humankind, both Jew and Gentile, in Christ's death:

The Jews,

God's dearly beloved, chosen people – a holy people unto the Lord upon whom God sets out his love -- the very people whom God calls out by name from the nations, play an important role in their saviors' crucifixion. And God also involves Gentiles specifically of the Roman Empire, off the greatest, arguably the most civilized empire ever, renowned for their engineering, their legal system and their government system – all from which we heavily borrow to this day. The cast of characters are amongst the best of which humankind could offer. Not only that, our story takes place during the Pax Romana, a period of great peace, the longest period of peace in the Mediterranean world since the beginning of civilization.

With all these auspicious, favorable conditions, in this story of God's salvation, what do we do to God's most precious gift to us? What do we do to His son – God's greatest expression of love to us? What do we do?

We subject him to an unfair trial, we mock him, we spit on his face, we scourge him and then we crucify him through the most painful, the most heinous, the most humiliating means we could invent. We have proven -- historically – that we are disobedient sinners, doomed to God's wrath.

But there's Good News.

In Romans, Paul says, "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to ... life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:18-19).

Or to put in the context of a story of two trees,
Jesus died on the tree of death so that
we can live through the tree of life.

“For as through one tree many were made sinners, so
through another tree many will be made righteous.”

Praise God that through the suffering and death of the God-man on the
tree of death, we will be made righteous and receive joy and eternal life
through the tree of life!

Praise God!

Let us pray.

Lord, we know we have sinned against you like our first father Adam and
in Adam all die, but in Christ, Death is swallowed up in victory, and so we
shall all be made alive. So we thank you for the death of death through
your Son's death, through your Son's victory on the cross so that death will
no longer have sting. We thank you for your Son's victorious resurrection,
for we have victory and everlasting life through your Son's
accomplishments. We thank you and praise you for your wonderful
redemptive plan. As a result of your Son's sacrifice on the tree, may we,
out of gratitude, go out and love others as our self and love you with all our
heart, soul, strength and mind.