**03/24/24**

**The Lamb**

**Introduction ~**

Tonight I want us to think through some of the implications of Jesus’ death on that Roman cross some 2000 plus years ago. This is a hard subject to wrap our minds around; to help us do this I have a video I’d like to share; *video (the sacrificial Lamb)*

It’s hard to think about an innocent creature dying unjustly. But that’s exactly what it took, the ONLY innocent One died so that we could be forgiven. This was something God had determined must happen if any of us would be saved; 1 Peter 1:18-21 ~

… 18knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you 21who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.[[1]](#footnote-1)

To examine this event in some detail I’d like to use the prophet Isaiah as the basis of our ruminations together this evening.

**Context ~**

Isaiah described this event in picturesque language roughly eight hundred years[[2]](#footnote-2) prior to the death of the Savior; Isaiah 53:7 ~

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So He opened not His mouth.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The verb “oppressed” (נִגַּ֨שׂ) [[4]](#footnote-4) [năw gǎśʹ] means, “to have the payment of a debt sternly exacted”,[[5]](#footnote-5) leading to the derived meaning of “*to be oppressed*” in general.”[[6]](#footnote-6) The range of meanings include “to press,” “to drive,” “to oppress,” “to exact,” or “to exert demanding pressure.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

It’s interesting that the Holy Spirit chose to use this particular verb in the Nif‘al verb stem which commentators say usually conveys passive action. That is, the subject of the verb receives the action. The oppression Jesus experienced was the doing of another.[[8]](#footnote-8) In fact, it was our sin which was laid on Jesus that oppressed Him.

What’s more, this verb, “oppressed” (נִגַּ֨שׂ) [[9]](#footnote-9) [năw gǎśʹ], is in the perfect tense. Hebrew doesn’t use tense in the same way English and Greek does. [[10]](#footnote-10) In Hebrew the perfect tense refers to the kind of action, it refers to the totality and finality of that action without dividing up its chronological processes.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Jesus was oppressed to the nth degree, to the uttermost. My sin, your sin, our sin, mankind’s sin, was the source of Jesus’ oppression; 2 Corinthians 5:21 ~

21For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.[[12]](#footnote-12)

But there is more than oppression expressed in our text; Isaiah 53:7 ~

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So He opened not His mouth.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Jesus was, “afflicted” (נַעֲנֶה֮) [[14]](#footnote-14) [nǎ ‘ǎnĕhʹ]. Here the verb is reflexive, telling us that the subject of the verb is both carrying out and receiving the action of the verb.[[15]](#footnote-15) What that tells us is that nobody was afflicting Jesus against His will. He was both the author and receiver of affliction. God in all His mystery was involved in this sacrifice; John 10:17-18 ~

17“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.[[16]](#footnote-16)

This is the affliction He, Jesus, willingly submitted Himself to.[[17]](#footnote-17) His acceptance of this, His silence in the face of injustice, these acts are founded on love and faith rather than from weakness or prudence.[[18]](#footnote-18)

**He Was Silent ~**

Jesus came as the Servant of God, and servants are not permitted to talk back, but instead they submit to the will of the one they serve.[[19]](#footnote-19) Such is the case with Jesus; Isaiah 53:7 ~

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So He opened not His mouth.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Jesus Christ was silent in the face of false accusations and unfair treatment, even in the face of outrageous abuse. [[21]](#footnote-21) He was silent before Caiaphas: [[22]](#footnote-22) Matthew 26:62–63 ~

62And the high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?” 63But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”[[23]](#footnote-23)

He was silent before the chief priests and elders; [[24]](#footnote-24) Mathew 27:12 ~

12And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.[[25]](#footnote-25)

He was silent before Pilate; [[26]](#footnote-26) Matthew 27:14 ~

14But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.[[27]](#footnote-27)

He was silent before Herod Antipas; [[28]](#footnote-28) Luke 23:9 ~

9Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.[[29]](#footnote-29)

He did not speak when the soldiers mocked and beat Him; 1 Peter 2:21–23 ~

21For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 *“Who* *committed no sin,*

*Nor was deceit found in His mouth”;*

23who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;[[30]](#footnote-30)

And yet, a more careful reading of these passages will show that Jesus did not remain completely silent.[[31]](#footnote-31) He did answer Pilate, the only one involved in the tragedy that did not know the Scriptures. Jesus said enough to give Pilate an understanding of what was really happening. He did respond to Caiaphas, not in defense but in self-identification to provide him one last chance to repent.

Why would Jesus remain silent in the face of false accusations and abuse? Because of His confidence in God, David expressed the same idea in Psalm 39:9 ~

9 I was mute, I did not open my mouth,

Because it was You who did *it*.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Jesus did not defend Himself; His silence was maintained in the face of the dishonest, unjust, and malicious accusers He faced.[[33]](#footnote-33) Jesus’ willing submission is emphatically expressed through the use of the double figures, “oppressed” and “afflicted”.[[34]](#footnote-34) Honestly, the imagery that Isaiah used to show the sovereign Lord depicted in Isaiah alongside of the suffering Servant was a puzzle to the Old Testament saints.[[35]](#footnote-35) But… they should have been able to tease out the meaning.

**The Sacrificial Lamb ~**

The language of the Lamb should have given them an idea of what was happening; Isiah 53:7 ~

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So He opened not His mouth.[[36]](#footnote-36)

This is pictured twice using the common imagery of a sheep, actually a “lamb” (רָחֵל) [[37]](#footnote-37) [rā ḥēlʹ], who silently endures their own slaughter.[[38]](#footnote-38) Sheep are generally docile and will tend to blindly follow, even to their own destruction. [[39]](#footnote-39) Here, the quiet, gentle nature of a lamb is being stressed, a nature that all the Jews would be well aware of as they regularly participated in the Passover sacrifice.[[40]](#footnote-40) In fact, these animals formed an important part of many sacrifices.[[41]](#footnote-41)

In the Scriptures, the lamb is used as a type for purity, for love, for tenderness, and for those who are defenseless.[[42]](#footnote-42) Then, of course, it is a symbol for the Savior.[[43]](#footnote-43) This imagery as literally scattered through the Old and New Testaments, one good example is Revelation 5:6 ~

6And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Here, the glorified Jesus is depicted as the sacrificial Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world and, in the process, the Lamb who overcame death, the power of Satan, and sin. Everything Jesus experienced was unjust and contrary to Jewish law, yet He did not seek to appeal for another trial.[[45]](#footnote-45) Instead, He saw this as part of the Father’s plan, and accepted it as such; John 18:11 ~

11So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?”[[46]](#footnote-46)

**Wrath Satisfied ~**

The oppression Jesus endured was necessary to correct a problem we could not solve on our own; Romans 1:18 ~

18For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,[[47]](#footnote-47)…

Mankind collectively, and we individually, have earned the wrath of God through our actions. This wrath has been building from the first rebellion to the present, it reflects the universal nature of our fallen-ness; 1 John 2:16 ~

16For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.[[48]](#footnote-48)

In our native condition, we are all part of this world system that opposes God. It is this that oppressed the Son of God, but if humankind were to be spared, something had to be done. A precursor of the final solution is given through the Passover pictured in Exodus 12:21-23 ~

21Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover *lamb*. 22And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip *it* in the blood that *is* in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that *is* in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. 23For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike *you*.[[49]](#footnote-49)

The sheep being pictured is (רָחֵל) [[50]](#footnote-50) [rā ḥēlʹ], often translated as a “lamb.”[[51]](#footnote-51) The way this passage is structured is important, it designates a single sheep to be offered as the prescribed sacrifice for Passover;[[52]](#footnote-52) Exodus 12:5-7 ~

5Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats. 6Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. 7And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.[[53]](#footnote-53)

This prefigured Jesus as our Passover Lamb. Because of His shed blood the wrath of God passes over us. This wrath reflects the severity of our problem. Without His death, we all die with no hope. Sin is not only a crime against God, one resulting in our being condemned to die, it is also a disease which produces the death of our souls. [[54]](#footnote-54)

Jesus paid the price for our pardon and He is the cure for our sin-infection.[[55]](#footnote-55) 1 Peter 3:18 ~

18For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,[[56]](#footnote-56)…

**Sacrifice ~**

Divine justice demanded that the consequences of our sin would be paid, and Jesus provided that satisfaction.[[57]](#footnote-57) Isaiah 53:7 ~

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So He opened not His mouth.[[58]](#footnote-58)

But… why is a sacrifice required? It is true that God is loving and merciful, but He is also holy and righteous.[[59]](#footnote-59) He cannot simply overlook sin, which is fundamentally failing to do what God says to do, or doing what God says not to do.

When this happens the holiness and righteousness of God is violated and the only righteous response is holy wrath.[[60]](#footnote-60) Yet, being a God who loves, in grace and mercy He provided for the renewal of our relationship with Him.[[61]](#footnote-61) The Son of God, Jesus the Christ, was sacrificed to meet the holy and just requirements of a God who has been wronged. 1 Corinthians 15:3 ~

3For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,[[62]](#footnote-62)…

In Isaiah we have the repeated image of the dumb, innocent lamb being led in silence to the altar where it will be slain.[[63]](#footnote-63) Its death is not due to anything it has done, it will die in the place of those who deserve to die. It’s no accident that this same imagery was picked up by John the Baptist who would identify Jesus as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”[[64]](#footnote-64) John 1:29 ~

29The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world![[65]](#footnote-65)

The fact is that all references to the Lamb of God in the New Testament spring from this passage in Isaiah, with overtones from Passover.[[66]](#footnote-66) Jesus, as the Lamb of God, quietly submitted to cruel abuse and, ultimately, to death.[[67]](#footnote-67) In accepting this, Jesus Christ was crucified with criminals as a criminal.[[68]](#footnote-68) Mark 15:24-28 ~

24And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them *to determine* what every man should take.

25Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. 26And the inscription of His accusation was written above:

THE KING OF THE JEWS

27With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. 28So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, *“And He was numbered with the transgressors.”*[[69]](#footnote-69)

**The Price ~**

The load Jesus bore was beyond imagining, it was the weight of our sin.[[70]](#footnote-70) The way was long, with the plan of redemption beginning to unfold on the same day Adam and Eve sinned.[[71]](#footnote-71) The culmination of that plan fell on Jesus over 2000 years ago. John 19:28-30 ~

28After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” 29Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. 30So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.[[72]](#footnote-72)

In all of this Jesus did not turn back, He persevered to the end and finally declared, “it is finished!” [[73]](#footnote-73) He endured blows and bruises; He felt physical pain as well as spiritual pain when God forsook Him upon the cross.[[74]](#footnote-74) And then (from a human perspective) He finally died and was buried;[[75]](#footnote-75) 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 ~

3For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,[[76]](#footnote-76)…

With burial, the proof of that death was provided, He was indeed dead. [[77]](#footnote-77) The Roman authorities would never have release the body to Joseph and Nicodemus if Jesus had not been confirmed to be dead;[[78]](#footnote-78) Mark 15:42-45 ~

42Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. 45So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.[[79]](#footnote-79)

**Conclusion ~**

Jesus He was wronged and abused, oppressed and afflicted. [[80]](#footnote-80) The Father had decreed that the Servant must suffer; but eventually Jesus would be vindicated and blessed of the Father.[[81]](#footnote-81) Being the only innocent man, He refused to assert His innocence, and instead accepted the injustice of it while freely offering Himself to suffer and die in our places.[[82]](#footnote-82)

But now, in Jesus, we find that there is a unity to God’s plan. Jesus suffered once and for all, and He is even now setting the stage for His return in glory.[[83]](#footnote-83) 1 Peter 4:12-13 ~

12Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.[[84]](#footnote-84)

Jesus’ suffering and death purchased pardons for those who are guilty of violating God’s laws. That… well, that includes everyone. The righteous had to die for the unrighteous; Romans 5:6 ~

6For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.[[85]](#footnote-85)

Where does that leave us? First, have you personally received the pardon that Jesus purchased at such a great personal cost? If you have, are you prepared, as Jesus was, in the face of injustice to entrust yourself into the hands of the Father, letting Him make things right?

If you think about it, you realize He’s the only One with the wisdom and power to make it right anyway, and He’s working on a much larger agenda than we realize. The same was true for the leaders of the Jews when they rejected the Messiah.

Our God is greater, wiser, and more powerful than we realize. And He asks us to trust Him.

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