

As A Lamb To the Slaughter

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Bible Text: Isaiah 53:7

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If you will, look with me in your Bibles to Isaiah 53. We have been working down through this chapter for some time and I'm really in a hurry because we want to give the glean of all that the Spirit has written here and as much as possible. We don't glean it all but every time we come back to it prayerfully, our eyes open even a little bit more to Christ and that work that he has been pleased to accomplish for his people.

We'll read the entire chapter again, although today the emphasis is going to be on verse 7 and I want to speak with you about this matter of Christ as a lamb to the slaughter. Christ as a lamb to the slaughter. Verse 1 of Isaiah 53,

1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he

shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Someone this past week asked me if I had ever watched the movie that came out a number of years ago, "The Passion of the Christ," by Mel Gibson. It's been a long while since I heard that title mentioned and so I was a little bit taken off guard but evidently he had gone to a place of worship over the Easter holiday and they had played that dvd as part of the worship service. So I had to gather my thoughts and try to remember what I remembered about what I didn't like about the movie because I remember when it first came out, I never saw it from beginning to end but I did see enough of the reviews, I did hear enough of the interviews that they did with Mel Gibson to know that I didn't want anything to do with it.

I found four particular fundamental errors with it and as I gathered my thoughts and started talking to this man, the Lord gave me some clarity to remember and then I went back. But the first thing I told him was any work of men that men do by way of drama or paintings or pictures to try to depict the sufferings of a Christ of their imagination, because that's really what it is, they're imagining Christ to be a certain way never having seen him, I have to say, known him, but through just what they've been taught, but to try to depict these sufferings in some sort of audiovisual manner when in truth the only record that God has given us of his Son is recorded right here in this word, I can tell you already it's false without even having looked at it. I say it all the time: if God had purposed that the Gospel be communicated through drama, there were plenty of Colosseums were built to do plays and the Lord could have said, "Go from city to city and put together plays to teach men and women about why I came and what I'm doing." They didn't have cameras back then but they certainly had artists. If the Lord had purposed that his Gospel be communicated by means of pictures or symbols, he could certainly have commissioned like presidents have done, commissioned people to draw their picture and then to pass it down through the generations and say, "Make sure that from generation to generation these pictures, these visuals are portrayed." To me it is a demeaning of what is written right here. You will not find any better picture of the sufferings of Christ than what the Spirit caused these men of the Scriptures to write and so let this be our study and that's what we're doing.

But secondly, I remember hearing the interviews and they're out there. You can Google them and find them on the internet. But the producer, Mel Gibson, did an interview and said he did the movie as a kind of penitence for his life, recognizing his own misgivings in faith, that this was his gift to God. Well, he himself said that every part of the movie had to do with one of those ritualistic stations of the cross which year after year there are still people today that have been raised in these types of religions that physically still go through the same, the pilgrimages over there, they're going through, following supposedly the footsteps of Christ, following his example. Dear friends, it's nothing more than the blind leading the blind. There are even certain places where people will flagellate themselves and actually draw blood and conclude the stations of the cross with

themselves being crucified. They'll literally have people take and drive nails into their hands. They believe that by so doing they are in some way gaining heaven. Whether it's the producer that thinks that by putting out such a movie or people that follow him, it is a very deadly and very wretched false hope that people have.

But the third thing that I told this man that asked me is that it portrays Christ's sufferings as physical alone. Now, that's true, there was physical suffering that Christ endured but it can in no way depict the spiritual soul suffering of our Lord and what he endured as the sin-bearer. I don't know of any man that could say it any better than what the Spirit of God already said here in Isaiah 53:10, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him." You see, even that the movie has it wrong. It is showing what men did to him. That's true, he did endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, but what the Scriptures are stating here, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him." They didn't do one thing to him but what God himself ordained and purposed. "He hath put him to grief." You see, even Mel Gibson got the Jews upset because he was using the movie to kind of blame the Jews for the death of Christ and a lot of them said that's antisemitism so they were all fighting that war. Well, if you want to start another war, just state that God put his Son on that cross. He spared not his own Son but delivered him up, and you'll find some people even in so-called Christendom get fighting mad that somehow the cross shouldn't have happened. I've heard preachers say that, that if men just believed, then Christ would not have had to die. Well, they completely miss the truth of Scripture that apart from his death none would be saved. That there is none that can believe nor will believe apart from the Spirit drawing them and when the Spirit draws, what does he draw them to and who does he draw them to? Christ and him crucified, that finished work. It says, "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." That's what it means for Christ to have been made sin, his soul made an offering for sin. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."

But the fourth there that I brought up to this man that asked me is who would dare play the part of the Lord Jesus anyway? Who am I to even consider thinking putting myself in that place and making a drama of it? So from beginning to end, what we need is the word and that's what I want to do. I want us to look prayerfully at this word today and may the Lord be pleased to draw our attention to it. What can we learn of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus and its significance as portrayed here in God's word, the inspired word of God. I'd rather believe this than any man's word but written that sinners such as we who were taught of the Spirit might believe on him. It's not just to stir up emotions. Music and visuals can do that. They can stir up emotions. People that watch it get religious. I clicked on the interview of the man that played the part and he said partway through he started becoming a man of prayer. He'd take a break off the scene and go over there. Well, what God are you praying to? There has been no revelation and truth of the word, especially when the whole portrayal of Christ that he was the actor in was false. But the Spirit's work is to draw sinners to this Christ right here, the one we're reading about and to his finished work.

The first thing we see here concerning him and the description of him is that he is as the lamb to the slaughter. That's where I want to start. It says he was oppressed in verse 7,

"he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." What is the significance, first of all, of Christ as the lamb? I took a concordance and normally you might think, well lamb, that would have been back after Israel was in Egypt, the Passover lamb, so you would normally think perhaps that that was the first reference to a lamb in Scripture but it wasn't. Look with me in Genesis 22:7 and I'm talking about the actual use of the word "lamb" because we know that all the way back in the garden when the Lord took the fig leaves away from Adam and Eve he killed some animals and clothed them with the skin of those animals, whatever they were. There was death. That was the important thing, blood shed unto death. We know that this was taught, Adam and Eve taught this to their children because in Genesis 4 we understand that Abel was a shepherd and when it came time to offer that sacrifice, he took of his flock so there are different words that are used before Genesis 22 to show us that the Gospel was clearly in this message of substitution. A life for a life. Now, reading in the New Testament, we understand that there is no way that the blood shed of an animal could ever pay the sin debt of a man. It had to be a man for a man, but until Christ came, he is depicted in terms of one of these animals and here in our passage that we're reading, Isaiah 53, it's that of a lamb.

When you look at your concordance of the word "lamb" this is the first reference right here, Genesis 22 when God told Abraham to take his son, Issac, upon Mount Moriah which, again, was exactly where 2,000 years later Christ was crucified so even the place is significant here. I don't want to get drawn off there but as they went up the mountain, you can see in verse 3 it says that, "Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him." Now, Abraham in so doing believed that he would come again with his son. You say, "How do you know that?" Verse 5, "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." There was no question in Abraham's mind whatever God required of him, that son was to be a son that the Lord had given him.

But where I want you to see this is in verses 6 and 7, "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together." This clearly shows that Isaac would have been one of those that Abraham would have taught about how sacrifice was to be offered and that all the way back to Adam and Eve because, verse 7, "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Dear friends, this is the missing note today in worship and how few there are that even consider it. When they go into a place of worship, even where the Bible is read, and they're looking for fire. They love the fire. You'll hear it Monday morning. You'll hear it in your workplace, people coming back and telling you about how everybody got all fired up, "The preacher got them all fired up!" That's what they're after. It's all emotion, music. You can have the greatest speaker in the world and this might be a good question to ask him: we have the fire, we have the wood, do we have the lamb? Do you think you can get their attention?

It certainly had Isaac's. He heard his father say, "We're going up here to worship and come again." There's something wrong with this picture, though, where is the lamb? Where is the lamb? Oh, that we would be so troubled in our souls if we are ever brought into a situation, a place of worship where the lamb is not there. If you want one thing to say to a preacher, don't say, "Good message," just to get out. You might say, "Well, I saw a little bit of the fire. I saw a little bit of the wood. Somehow I missed the lamb." Go out the door. What do you think? Is it positive to think, to consider these things?

But here's the answer the Lord gave Abraham. We know the story. We know that he provided a ram as a substitute but here's what I want you to see here, "as a lamb to the slaughter." What is the significance of this as it pertains to Christ? "And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together." That satisfied Isaac. Even down to the point when his father took him and bound him willingly. All of that is even a type and a picture of Christ that we're seeing here in Isaiah 53 where he was oppressed, yet he opened not his mouth. I don't see any other word from Isaac. So even in that, even though the ram is a type of Christ as a substitute, Isaac in his willing submission to his father is a type and picture of how our Lord went to the cross in willing submission to his Father.

What does it mean, what was Abraham saying? Obviously he wasn't saying this of himself, in other words, he didn't just think this up. Such as a statement as what he made here would have had to have been by revelation. It shows us what God had been pleased to teach Abraham because Christ commended him thousands of years later in saying, "That faith which was reckoned to him unto the righteousness that Christ would come and fulfill, that faith caused Abraham to see my day and rejoice." He was looking beyond even that particular moment.

There are three things here that I believe that this means and this is not my own. I read this a number of years ago by one of the old writers and it has always stuck with me where he said: God will provide himself a lamb. Now, read that carefully to understand his saying the Lord would provide himself as if the Lord was speaking as the lamb, in other words, he would be that lamb. That's one way of reading it and certainly that's what we're understanding in Isaiah 53, "when it pleased the Lord to bruise him." This was God himself in the flesh taking the place of those sinners that he came to save. The Lord would provide himself as that lamb. It had to be. An animal can't take the place of a human. It had to be a man and what Abraham is saying is God would provide himself as that lamb.

But secondly, I believe it is saying that the Lord God would provide for himself a lamb. Certainly that's understandable. This wasn't something that men had to come up with and so even here, turning Isaac's mind to the Lord who would provide for himself. You know, when you stop and think about it, God is the offended party so he is the one that has to determine the satisfaction. You don't. You, the one who has offended, don't come to him and say, "Well, won't you please just accept my good works?" That won't work before a holy God. We're silent before him to hear what he has to say of how he has purposed to satisfy himself and the way he has purposed it is through his Son.

But the third rendering here would be simply that the Lord would provide or see to it and there the emphasis is on who does the providing. It's the Lord. Salvation is of the Lord and the whole message of the Gospel is that redemption for Christ's sheep, the honoring of the law, all of the satisfaction of his justice, all of the fulfillment of that eternal covenant and all of the eternal glory was his to accomplish, not ours. So when preachers leave an idea that God has done 99.9999% of the work like I've heard one preacher say, and all he's wanting of you is that little miniscule whatever remains, how far from the truth it is. No, God, do you see that? God will provide himself a lamb. This was God's to do and he has done it in his Son.

But the lamb from the beginning ever since the fall has been the principle animal of sacrifice. I'm going to show you some Scriptures and if we don't get much further than that, this is fine but look in Exodus 29. This is a study which I would encourage you if you've never done it and if you want just to go through the Scriptures and read some portions. I always take a chapter a day and read it just for my own edification. It has nothing to do with what I'm preaching. It's amazing how much of the Scriptures you can read slowly. I don't worry about getting through in a year. I've got a lifetime to read. But sometimes people ask, "Well, where do you start? What do you read?" Just get a concordance and look up the word "lamb" and then go through and just one day take a portion of Scripture like this and read what it has to say about a lamb and how that might pertain to Christ. You can spend a lifetime doing that so I'm not really exhausting this but just showing you.

Here in Exodus 29, look at the centrality; I don't even know if that's a good word. The whole worship was founded on the lamb, the sacrifice. Without it, there was condemnation. Even David when he numbered the people, it wasn't that he numbered the people, it's that he didn't offer a sacrifice when he had done the census. This is what was required.

In Exodus 29, beginning with verse 38, "Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar," this has to do with the consecrating of the priests, "two lambs of the first year," notice, "day by day continually." Until Christ came and fulfilled the law in his body and blood, working out that perfect righteousness, there could not be an end to these sacrifices and this is just one instance.

"Two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering." What if someone said, "Well, let's just offer the meal with the beaten oil. Can't God accept that? Just bring whatever you've got." No, this is always in the context of these lambs being offered morning and evening.

"And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour,

an offering made by fire unto the LORD." The fire by itself had no significance other than it was to consume the lamb. Therein was the importance, the sacrifice.

Verse 42 says, "This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee." That ought to tell you something right there that apart from a meeting here, you will not meet God. Not in grace. I don't know a person here that would want to stand before a holy God in all his justice without a sacrifice that he is satisfied with, that he has ordained. Not the works of these hands.

On special days, the same thing. Numbers 28:11. Look at that, Numbers 28:11. On those special feast days: the feast of Unleavened Bread, the New Moon, the Feast of Trumpets. You can read all of these but none of these feast days were to have been observed apart from the offering of lambs. Look at verse 11 of Numbers 28, "And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot." Even there you begin to get a little bit more of an idea as you go through of what was required. Not just any lamb, but without spot and on certain occasions seven lambs, one for each day. What do you think that the people then would have considered and concerned God? You would have to be dead as many are today, without life to even imagine approaching him without a sacrifice, without the appropriate sacrifice but people do. Today, there are people that go back to the Old Testament and try to imitate these feast days. They say, "We're still to observe them." They require people to bring their offerings. It's mainly the preacher trying to get a little bit fatter, richer, but they bring stuff, but that wasn't the purpose. The purpose was an opportunity to meet as God himself summoned the people, to once again consider that there could be no worship apart from the lamb, apart from God himself providing the lamb.

Look with me in Numbers 28, the same chapter, in verses 16 through 19. There are many here. We won't have time to go through them all, but this one is of particular importance because it has to do with the Passover. This is one that everybody knows about, the Passover, where we read, "And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD." When Christ came on this earth, it had become the Jewish Passover, that's how he referred to it, so far removed in how it was being observed.

"And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein: But ye shall offer a sacrifice made by fire for a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven lambs of the first year: they shall be unto you without blemish." Again, as we consider these offerings and the types and what they figured, it should not surprise us as we come to Isaiah 53:7 that when it says there that he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, that this is with reference to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Wasn't that John the Baptist's message as he came and preached, the forerunner of Christ? What was his message? "Behold the Lamb of God." After all the millenniums of offering

lambs day in and day out, "here is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Taketh away. He doesn't try to take it away, he took it away. That one death took away the sin there of the world. It means of sinners of every tribe, nation and tongue, not just the Jews. Again, Paul in 1 Corinthians 5 spoke of Christ as the Passover, "Christ our Passover which was slain."

That's the second part of this that I wanted to touch on. Not only is he the Lamb to the slaughter but consider that word "slaughter." It's a pretty violent word. We talk about the butcher shop, the slaughterhouse, so you envision images of just blood. It's like one old preacher said, "We have a slaughterhouse Gospel." It's true when you talk about the fact that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. But the idea here of the word "slaughter" is like elsewhere in Scripture it speaks of the lamb being slain. It has to do with the deliberate putting to death.

So that's what we have to see even here in Isaiah 53:7. He was oppressed, yes. He was afflicted, yes. Yet he opened not his mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, to the execution. Christ did not die a natural death. Had it not been for him coming to lay down his life, do you realize he would have lived forever as a man? There would have been no reason for him to die. I know he aged to a certain point, age 30, 33, but he would not have grown old and died. We don't even have to speculate there because just like with the lambs of the Old Testament, it was to be a lamb in its first year. The whole idea there is in its prime. You say, "Why at thirty?" You can go back and read in the Old Testament that that was the age which a Levitical priest was to enter into the ministry. Not before 30 years of age.

So Christ was fulfilling the type not only of the priest, but also of the sacrifice and the three and a half years that he walked upon this earth fits pretty carefully to even the Passover lamb which for four days was to be observed. Christ during those three and a half years was being observed by men. Why? To make sure that he was without blemish and without spot. You see, all of these things were required. But when it talks about the lamb to the slaughter, it's referring to our Lord and the type of death that he should die. It was to be a violent death. It was to be one that blood was shed and all that as a type and picture of God's justice, of his wrath being poured out upon him as the sin-bearer.

Paul spoke of this over in Philippians 2, if you look there with me, Philippians 2. Was he God? Absolutely. Verse 6 answers that, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." You can't be equal with God and not be God, okay? "But made himself of no reputation." You know, if you had the choice of becoming an animal, most of us sitting here would think, "Alright, I want to be the lion. I want to be roaring and I want to be something that stands out. The rhino with that horn on there." But a lamb? A lamb is an animal that's prey, preyed upon. David had to protect the lambs from the bears and the lions.

But here it says, "But made himself of no reputation," and not only became a man but it says here, "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Why made in the likeness of men? Well, he could not have been made as men were in their depravity. He was without sin, but he was certainly in their likeness.

It says here, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death," notice how the Spirit directed Paul, "even the death of the cross." Even the death of the cross. Yes, he was wronged. He was abused. He was oppressed and with sore affliction of men that was put upon him, but that death of the cross speaks volumes as to 1. Who he came to save. He didn't come to save the righteous. In his death, when it says "as a lamb to the slaughter," you find there the type of death that he died. "He was numbered among transgressors." Think about him hanging there on this cross between two thieves. Those about him mocking him. In their minds, he was smitten of God and afflicted. That's all they could think of. He was a just criminal. He was a liar otherwise he wouldn't be hanging there.

So the Lord God himself took that very type of death defined here in the word "slaughter." It wasn't that his blood was spilt. I know one of our hymns says that. I always have trouble singing it. No, it was shed. He shed his blood that God the Father might be the just Justifier. That God might be just in declaring righteous every one for whom he died. So that's why you'll read in Scripture that he is the Lamb slain. He didn't die of natural causes but slain.

Look at Revelation 5:6 and 12 and then one other reference and then we'll be done. Revelation 5. We're talking about worship. Remember, we went all the way back to the Old Testament and saw none could worship God apart from that sacrifice. This is a picture of glory. This is a picture of heaven. People talk about being in a glorified state but even then throughout eternity it will not be apart from the Lamb slain and that's what we see here in verse 6, "I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." One time execution death accomplished. "Having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." There you see a Lamb standing, not laying down. People that hand out these crucifixes that show a body that's still welded to that cross, that's not my Savior. You can wear that all day long around your neck but that's not my Savior. He's not here. He is risen as he said and here's a picture. He is as a Lamb standing that had been slain, yes, but risen.

Look at verse 12 in the same chapter, "Saying with a loud voice." What's the theme of heaven? One old writer said that most people in religion today wouldn't be happy in heaven anyway because they're so used to hearing about their works, doing this, this program, that program, and if they were in heaven, it's not about any of that. It's all about the Lamb slain which is the missing element in their worship all through their life. Why would you think they would be happy in heaven?

But that's the message, "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." It's the Lamb to the slaughter, "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." I don't know how you can get any clearer than that. All the glory belongs unto him.

You know, as we come for worship and there is a whole lot more and we'll come back to it, but as we come for worship week in, week out, my prayer is that that's how you come. I honestly do not worry about who is here and who is not. I know if I'm here, I have one need and that is to hear my Savior, Christ himself. If you're here, I trust that's why you're here. I trust that's why the Lord has brought you here, to hear him because we sure need him and that's really the only way we can approach a holy God.