

H O U S E o f W I S D O M

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Isaiah 53 - Part III

Everyone at one time or another will read something in the Bible and say, "I do not understand what I just read." Have you ever read something that you did not like because it just seemed wrong? Or, maybe it did not seem to fit what you were taught or have come to know. Some of the next verses to be discussed bothered me the way they were translated.

Isaiah 53:8: *He was taken from prison^(h6115) 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.* Lets examine each phrase separately, then put the scripture back together.

The first phrase to consider is *He was taken from prison^(h6115) and from judgment:* The Hebrew word *oster*^(h6115) (*o-tser*) is derived from *asar*^(h6113) which Strong gives a meaning of *to inclose*. Gesenius says, *a shutting up, restraint, oppression*; and Benner's Ancient Hebrew Lexicon says, *stop, in the sense of halting, shutting or restraining*. While Christ was bound, he was never physically in prison. The context indicates that the first phrase would be better rendered as the RSV: *By oppression^(h6115) and judgment (of the people, implied) he was taken away....* This word is also used to describe the plight of mankind in **Psalms 107:39:** *When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, trouble, and sorrow (RSV).*

The next phrase, *for he was cut off^(h1504) out of^(h4480) the land of the living:* In the Septuagint, the Greek word *ek*^(g1537) is used in lieu of the Hebrew *min*^(h4480) indicating a *source* from, or out of which something comes. The proper meaning of the word *gazar*^(h1504) is *to cut, to divide*: Literally, a tree is cut down (2Ki 6:4). A leper, being considered dead, was cut off from^(h4480) the temple (2Ch 26:21) and from mingling with healthy people. Literally, Jesus was cut off out of the land of the living when they killed him; also, metaphorically he was cut off, or separated⁽¹⁵⁰⁴⁾ from^(h4480) the land of the living. This idea can be seen from what Jesus said and John recorded:

John 5:24-25: *24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from^(g1537) death unto life. 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.* He is speaking of the spiritually dead. Those who hear and believe the words of Jesus and believe on the Father are passed out of spiritual death into spiritual life. This was the spiritual life from which Jesus was separated on the cross. Look at the prophecy in Psalms, which is quoted in the N.T.:

Psalms 22:1, 15: *1. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?.... (Mt 27:46) 15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.* Dust is a metaphor for fallen man. Jesus was treated and died like he was a sinner because of the people's misunderstanding and refusal to receive his teachings.

The last phrase to consider is: *for^(h4480) the transgression of my people was he stricken^(h5061).* Like the Hebrew word *min*^(h4480) the English word for is function word used in many ways, depending on the context. There are

a variety of ways this phrase is rendered in Bible translations. However, if the previous phrase is considered - who cut off the Messiah out of the land of the living? The church leaders were the instigators because they rejected Jesus as Messiah. So it was *on account of the transgression of my people was he stricken*. This idea of sin driving one to crucify the Savior is presented in the book of Hebrews in a figurative sense: **Hebrews 6:4-6**: *4. For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5. and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6. if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt (RSV).*

Here is a summary rendering of verse 8 as discussed above:

By oppression and judgment he was taken away, for he was cut off out of (or, separated from) the land of the living; on account of the transgression of my people was he stricken.

The import of the cross cannot be over emphasized. Paul said, *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world* (NIV). For the world to be crucified to us, we must have a correct understanding of the cross. Amen.