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v. 26—*Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee Am He.*— If she had begun to have an inkling about the identity of the One who spoke so wonderfully to her, it was now confirmed. He whom the Jews expected as the promised Prince of the house of David was at the same time the One whom the Samaritans (and others) expected as the Prophet like unto Moses. She had not known at first who it was that said to her 'Give me to drink'; but now she understood how He could make a claim that marked Him out as greater than their father Jacob: it was the Coming One Himself who sat there by the well and spoke to her.

(*To be Continued*)

THE PENTATEUCH OF SUFFERING

H. C. HEWLETT

4. The Meekness of the Lamb (Isaiah 53:7-9)

Thus far we have traced the parallel between the first three books of Moses and the first three sections of the Song of the Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Corresponding to the book of Numbers which narrates the journeys of Israel through the wilderness is the fourth section, Isaiah 53:7-9, wherein we see the sufferings of Christ, not so much as the substitute who bears the infliction of Divine judgment for His people's sins, but as the lonely One who pursues His journey through a hostile scene. The book of Numbers in the Hebrew Bible bears the title 'bmidhbar' (i.e., in the wilderness), taken from the word in the opening verse, and this world was morally a wilderness to Christ as He walked through it. Can it be mere coincidence or is it a mark of the Divine authorship that when Philip met the eunuch in 'the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert', the eunuch was reading from this desert part of the Song? Clearly, to Philip the prophecy spoke of Jesus (See Acts 8:26-35).

The Servant's life was consummated in His death. The more the malice of men was shown toward Him, the more brightly

there shone the beauty of His ways. Amid all the scenes of bitter mockery and of utmost wrong which come before us here, there is radiant the moral majesty of the true King of men. Thus Peter, in quoting from this passage (see 1 Pet. 2:21-22) speaks of Christ as the example, the 'hupogrammos', i.e., the writing-copy, including all the alphabet, given to pupils to show them how to form their letters. Christ is the whole alphabet of the blessed life. In Him we see every grace of character in glorious development and in perfect harmony.

In this section it is God who speaks. The plural 'we' of verses 1-8 gives place to the singular 'My' of 'My people', as in the 'My Servant' of 52:13. In 52:4 we read: 'For thus saith the Lord God, My people went down. . .' In 53:8 the possessive phrase is taken up again, and used by God as no member of the nation could use it. The people have spoken of 'the iniquity of us all'. Their voice is hushed now, and God speaks the words that vindicate the One whom men dispised.

Verse 7. The Submissive One

'*He was oppressed, and He was afflicted*'. 'Oppressed' (nagas, to treat harshly) tells of the experience of the Servant at the hands of His people, and particularly their leaders, from His arrest in Gethsemane and throughout the long night of infamy and shame till Pilate delivered Him to be crucified. It is noteworthy that the Kal participle of 'nagas' is translated taskmaster as in Exodus 3:7 (their cry by reason of their taskmasters). As the Israelites in their bondage were driven on relentlessly by these, so the despised Messiah was hastened from scene to scene of suffering by the bitterness and fury of His foes. Some have given the verb the sense of 'it was exacted', (as though in reference to the claims of righteousness against the substitute) but clearly those who inflicted the sufferings here spoken of were the Jewish leaders.

'*He (emphatic) was afflicted*.' 'Afflicted' (the niphal participle of 'anah, to bring low, as in 53:4) is used reflexively (cp. Ex. 10:3, 'to humble thyself'), and here with the sense of permission. He let Himself be afflicted, or brought low. Not by man's compulsion, but of infinite grace He suffered all the indignities heaped upon

Him. The emphatic pronoun points to the wonder of this unique submission. In the self-humbling of Phil. 2:6-8, the steps downward from the Throne to the Cross were altogether of His own volition, so that His obedience to God was without resentment and without hesitation. So it is in Isa. 53:7 in the endurance of all the anguish meted out to Him. In Gethsemane He spoke His own proper title 'I Am' (see John 18:5), and His captors were prostrate at His feet. Only one ray of His glory, as it were, shone out, but it revealed that love, and only love, permitted the agonies of His humiliation. To Peter He said: 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give more than twelve legions of angels' (Matt. 26:53).

'Yet He opened not His mouth.' The imperfect tense of the verb adds to the vividness of the thought, as though we are made to stand in the presence of these happenings and watch with wonder—He opens not His mouth! Earlier His townspeople had marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded from His lips (Luke 4:22), and the officers had said: 'Never man spake like this Man' (John 7:46). His words had healed broken hearts, spoken forgiveness and peace to the sinner, and had even called the dead back to life. But now He is silent. Here is moral majesty. 'Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again' (1 Pet. 2:23). Repeated provocation brought no word of annoyance to His lips. Nought could demean Him. Moses, in a moment of provocation, spoke inadvisedly with his lips (Ps. 106:33), and Paul spoke concerning another high priest words which, while true enough, he soon retracted. The Lord Jesus, however, spoke no words causing Him regret and requiring to be withdrawn.

In the preceding Song, Isaiah 50:4-9, we read: 'The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned.' Every word spoken by those holy lips was a word first given Him by God. Clearly, then, when He was silent, no word had been given Him to speak.

Here we pause to consider the scene in the Jewish council when He stood in silence while false witness was borne against

Him. 'The high priest arose, and said unto Him, answerest Thou nothing. . . . But Jesus held His peace.' But when the high priest adjured Him by the living God that He tell them whether He were the Son of God, He replied at once: 'Thou hast said' (Matt. 26:62-64). This was no exception to His silence. The Word had said that to hear the voice of adjuration and not to utter that which was seen or known was sin. (See Lev. 5:1. R.V.). Hence the sinless One opened His mouth, and bore witness to His Person, and to His coming in glory. Thus it was the Word of God that bade Him speak. In silence, therefore, as in speech, He was the perfect One, the obedient One.

A second time this verse speaks of His silence, and with further meaning.

'He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.' It is not only the grandeur of His meekness which is portrayed, but the purpose of His submission. He had come that He might die. 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross,' *As the lamb to the slaughter.* The lamb is marked for death, and goes without resistance. The figure is more impressive because of the article with both 'lamb' and 'slaughter'. (Cp. 'where is *the* lamb for a burnt offering?'—Gen. 22:7). Many lambs were offered on Jewish altars, yet Scripture focuses our attention on the fulfilment of all such types in one sacrifice, and our gaze is fixed on 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' Even when being shorn a ewe is silent, the female sheep being a further picture of uncomplaining meekness. So the Sufferer opens not His mouth. He is about to take the place as the Substitute, and bows in silence to this supreme purpose, to the uttermost bound of His humiliation.

Verse 8. The Condemned One

'By oppression and judgment He was taken away'. (R.V.). Here the preposition 'in' is used of the immediate cause, i.e., out of, or arising from, or by. It is so used with the same noun in Psalm 107:39 ('through oppression'). 'Oppression and judgment' is a hendiadys for 'oppressive judgment' (so Lowth). 'Oppression'

(‘otzer, forcible restraint) coupled with judgment tells of the mockery of justice meted out to the Servant in His trial by the Jewish council. It was entirely against their legal code that a trial for life or death should take place at such an hour. The proceedings of the council were marked by falsehood, clamour and hatred; nothing daunted the judges in their thirst for His condemnation. Nor was it anything but a mockery of justice that Pilate should repeatedly pronounce the Prisoner innocent and then deliver Him to death, putting concern for his own doubtful safety before the sanctity of Roman law.

‘*And His generation who shall declare?*’ This line has been remarkable for the variety of meanings which have been taken from it, but it is a cardinal principle of Bible study to accept that meaning which most suits the context. The setting is that of the infamous trial of the Holy One, and so we render in accordance with this. ‘Generation’ (dor) refers firstly to a period or age, in the usual sense of a generation, and then to the moral character of a class of men. Who shall declare His generation, the character of those with whom He had moral kinship, i.e., who shall raise a voice to proclaim His integrity? So Lowth translates: ‘*And His manner of life who shall declare?*’ In the trial there was no witness for the defence, no one to bear witness to His innocence.

Yet we know His generation, those with whom He was linked. ‘Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother’ (Matt. 12:50). This was His manner of life, to do the Father’s will, and those who so lived were His generation. Later, from the lips of a dying thief we hear: ‘This Man hath done nothing amiss’, and from a Roman officer: ‘Truly this was a righteous Man’, and ‘Truly this was the Son of God’. They witnessed to the truth, but none spoke of it when He stood before His judges.

‘*For He was cut off out of the land of the living*’. The trial of the Servant was characterised by unseemly haste, lest (in the thinking of His judges) He should be vindicated and delivered from their hands. Such was the bitterness of the leaders of the nation that they roused Pilate early in the morning, and gave him no respite, but pressed their charges upon him, till he capitulated

and 'delivered Jesus to their will' (Luke 23:25). Nothing could satisfy them but His death. He was denied even the right to live, denied a place in 'the land of the living.'

'For the transgression of My people was He stricken (lit. the stroke to Him)'. 'Stroke' (negha', from nagma', as in verse 4), tells of the judgment of God which He experienced. (The form 'lamo'—to Him—is unusual in the singular, but its number is vindicated by a kindred use in Isa. 44:15—'falleth down thereto', i.e., to it, the idol.'). The solemn fact of this clause has been dealt with in verses 4 and 5, but there is peculiar force in its occurrence in this part of the Song. Behind the mystery of the permissive will of God in the treatment which the Servant received from His foes lies the Divine purpose, that He should be a Sacrifice for the transgression of His own nation. And now it is God who speaks, even as the penitent part of the nation had owned it in verse 5. He has permitted the indignities that in such circumstances the Divine grace might be displayed, and the Divine will might be fulfilled in the death of the Servant.

Verse 9. The Vindicated One

'And they made His grave with the wicked' (R.V.). The word 'wicked' (rasha') is used in the forensic sense for those guilty, i.e., of crime. Men appointed to the Servant a grave with guilty ones who had suffered for their own crimes (the malefactors crucified with Him), but this indignity they were not permitted to carry out. The last dishonour to the holy form of the Sufferer was the spear wound in His side. Thereafter, when once that 'precious crimson tide' had poured forth, nought but respect was paid to Him. Loving hands took the Body from the Cross, wrapped it in costly spices, and placed it in a new tomb.

'But He was with the rich in His death' (J.N.D.). The rendering 'but' rather than 'and' brings out the contrast between the dishonour of association with the guilty, and the honour of association with the rich. 'Rich' in this verse is in the singular (a rich man); in the over-ruling of God a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea gave to the holy Body his own tomb.

'In His death (lit. in His deaths)'. The use of the plural instead of the singular brings into vivid emphasis the intensity of His

death, and is of peculiar interest here, seeing that it is in the clause before us that the tide of rejection ends, and that of reverence begins. In the Deuteronomic portion of the Song the tide of honour is seen in full flood; here, in verse 9, is its beginning. Hence the tribute to His death, which was beyond measure and beyond parallel in its anguish as in its value.

'Because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.' The preposition 'al' is to be given its causative sense 'because', for the words that follow tell of the reason for the Divine over-ruling that gave the servant burial in a rich man's tomb. The character of the servant is seen in the worth of His deeds and of His words. First, deeds, and then words. This is the true order of life, even as we read in Acts 1:1 of 'all that Jesus began both to do and teach'.

1. *His Deeds.* 'He had done no violence.' This latter term (*hamas*) aptly expresses the behaviour of the people of Israel toward their King. (Nor is it otherwise today in the affairs of men, as the columns of any daily newspaper make only too evident.) Insult and brutality marked their ways, but those things spoken of the Servant in the first of the Songs (Isa. 42:1-4) characterised Him even in the suffering of death. Gentleness, compassion and love were manifest in all His ways (cf. Luke 22:51, 61; 23:28, 34, 43; John 19:26-27).

2. *His Words.* No deceit (*mirmah*, treachery) was in His mouth. Never did He lure men on by promises which He could not fulfil, or entice them with a prospect that was not for their highest good. The scenes which we have noted just above in Luke and John show the beauty of His deeds through the beauty of His words, even when the rulers of Israel betrayed the hopes of their nation, as Judas did the One in whom those hopes centred. His words, far from being deceitful, were perfect in their season as in their expression. How wonderful it must have been for those who companied with Him to hear the eternal truth pouring from the pure lips of its own Fount!

Let us ask ourselves one question as we come to the end of our meditation on this section. 'Is our fellowship with Christ such that to us, also, this world is a spiritual desert?'

(To be Continued)