

Sin Bearer or Sin Eater?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Jesus Christ, our Savior, the sin-bearer for all humankind

1. Isa. 53:10-11; 2Cor. 5:21; 1Peter 2:24

B. Humankind has always known at some level that they will account for their works done in this life

1. Some try to avoid it by trying to extend their lives; the ancient Chinese ate mercury and animal horns believing it would extend life

2. Some avoid it by refusing to consider it; atheists and unbelievers

3. Some developed a theology around paying in the afterlife; the ancient Greeks and Hades; the Egyptians and treasure tombs

4. Burying the dead with a death fee to pay on the other side

5. In ancient Europe and South America, the doctrine of the sin eater developed independently. Tlazolteotl, the Aztec goddess of earth and fertility had a redemptive role in the religious practices of the Meso-American civilization. At the end of an individual's life, he was allowed to confess his misdeeds to this deity, and according to legend she would cleanse his soul by eating its filth.

C. Sin-eating is a fascinating concept

1. A sin-eater is a person who consumes a ritual meal in order to magically take on the sins of another person. The food was believed to absorb the sins of a recently deceased person, thus absolving the soul of the person. Sin-eaters, as a consequence, carried the sins of all people whose sins they had eaten. It was done in the belief that the soul would rest and not wander the earth haunting the living. Sin-eaters cut themselves off from all social contact and lived as a rule in a remote place alone, and others avoided him as they would a leper. They were viewed as associates of evil spirits and were only called upon when someone died.

2. John Bagford, (1650) includes a description of the sin-eating ritual in his letter in Leland's Collectanea, 76. "Notice was given to an old sire before the door of the house, when some of the family came out and furnished him with a stool, on which he sat down facing the door; then they gave him a coin which he put in his pocket, a crust of bread which he ate, and a bowl of ale which he drank off at a draught. After this he got up and pronounced the rest of the sould, for which he had pawned his own soul." Richard Munslow of Shropshire, England died in 1906 is said to be the last sin-eater in England. However, in Appalachia the practice of sin eating continued into the 1930s.

3. We have an artifact in our own traditions left over from this. Dutch doed-koecks or dead-cakes are cookies shaped like men and eaten in memory by family and friends of the departed. Martha Stewart has a recipe for them that uses the traditional caraway instead of ginger. In the 16th century, a German woman borrowed this tradition during the holidays and said that they represented her holiday guests. We call them gingerbread men today. Some have even categorized Jesus as a sin eater. (Wikipedia)

D. Even though there are a number of common points between Jesus and the sin-eaters, He was a sin-bearer who knew no sin; He who loved and offered Himself to save the world was despised and isolated by the very ones He loved and died for.

1. Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch - Acts 8:32-35

I. JESUS WAS DESPISED

- A. Isa. 53:3 - Despised is from bazah: to disesteem, despise, disdain, viewed as contemptible; to be treated with scorn as a vile person (Strongs 959)
- B. Matt. 27:39-44 - Reviled is from blasphemeo: to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, calumniate, blaspheme; to be evil spoken of (Strongs 987)
 - 1. Mocking is from empaizo: to play or trifle with, to mock (Strongs 1702)
- C. Rejected - Luke 9:22, 17:25

II. JESUS WAS A MAN OF SORROWS

- A. Isa. 53:3; Matt. 26:38 - Sorrows is from makob - anguish or affliction, grief, pain, sorrow (Strongs 4341)

III. JESUS WAS ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF

- A. Isa. 53:4; Heb. 4:15 - Grief is from choliy: malady, anxiety, calamity, disease, grief, sickness; Infirmities, native weakness and frailty, feebleness of health; lack of strength and capacity (Strongs 2483)

IV. JESUS WAS UNAPPRECIATED BY HIS PEOPLE

- A. Isa. 53:4; John 1:10-11

V. JESUS WAS A TROUBLE-BEARER FOR OTHERS

- A. Isa. 53:4; Matt. 8:16-17

VI. JESUS WAS WITHOUT DECEIT

- A. Isa. 53:9; 1Peter 2:22

VII. JESUS WAS SILENT BEFORE HIS PERSECUTORS

- A. Isa. 53:7; Matt. 26:63, 27:12-14

VIII. JESUS TOOK THE PUNISHMENT FOR OTHERS

- A. Isa. 53:5; 1Peter 2:24-25

IX. JESUS WAS SIN-BEARER FOR OTHERS

- A. Isa. 53:5, 10, 12; 1Cor. 15:3; Heb. 9:28; Rom. 4:25

X. JESUS WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS

- A. Isa. 53:12; Luke 22:37

XI. JESUS WAS INTERCESSOR FOR TRANSGRESSORS

- A. Isa. 53:12; Luke 23:34 - Do we understand that He began His work of intercession before He died on the cross?

XII. JESUS WAS DEPRIVED OF JUSTICE

- A. Isa. 53:8; Matt. 27:24

XIII. JESUS WAS BURIED WITH THE RICH

A. Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57-60

XIV. JESUS AROSE FROM THE DEAD

A. Isa. 53:10; Mark 16:9

XV. JESUS WAS EXALTED AND HONORED

A. Isa. 53:12; Phil. 2:9-11

Conclusion:

- A. The Ethiopian eunuch inquired about Isaiah 53 if perhaps the prophet was speaking of himself or of somebody else; Philip began at that Scripture and “preached unto him Jesus” - Acts 8:35.
- B. Because Jesus had already preached Jesus to the apostles - Luke 24:44-49
 - 1. Do we understand that the first sermon preached about Jesus was preached by Jesus?
- C. Jesus came to be sin-bearer for the whole world - Eph. 1:3-9