

The background of the cover is a photograph of a person on a cross, silhouetted against a bright, hazy sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow that fills the sky and casts a long shadow of the cross onto the ground. The ground is a grassy hillside with a stone path leading up to the base of the cross. The overall mood is solemn and contemplative.

# **The Suffering Servant**

## **Meditations for Easter**

**Mary Agronah**

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Servant  
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The Suffering Servant: Meditations for Easter

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Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:9-10)

# INTRODUCTION

Within the profound depths of Isaiah's prophetic prophecies is a tragic story that transcends time and echoes through the halls of history—the story of the suffering servant. Throughout Isaiah 52 and 53, we meet a character whose representation evokes both awe and disbelief, and whose suffering reveals the very core of divine redemption.

For millennia, the identity of this suffering servant has been a subject of fervent debate, particularly within Jewish communities where interpretations diverge, and discussions persist. Yet, for Christians, the revelation is unequivocal—the suffering servant finds his ultimate fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

As we read through Isaiah 52 and 53, we are drawn into the depths of this profound prophecy, uncovering the mystery of the suffering servant and witnessing the convergence of divine providence and human weakness. It is an experience that takes us to the foot of the cross, where the servant's pain meets God's unlimited love.

In the pages that follow, we will join Dr. Mary Agronah on a journey to discover the immense significance

of the suffering servant, to find traces of his suffering in the corridors of history, and to see the transformational power of his redemptive love. Through the lens of Isaiah's prophesy, we are asked to ponder the mystery of divine suffering and accept the deep truth that redemption occurs in the midst of anguish.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE SUFFERING SERVANT

For lovers of Christian movies, February 2004 remains very significant for the release of the movie "The Passion of the Christ" directed by Mel Gibson. Significant to this release was the fact that the movie came out in the United States on February 25, 2004. This day was Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent for many orthodox believers. Lent is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. Thus, the end of Lent also begins Easter. Although Lent is popular among many orthodox churches, it is not so common among evangelical believers.

The Passion of the Christ captures the final 12 hours before Jesus Christ's death. Personally, the first time I watched the movie, I cried like a baby. What! The acting was so real, and I even felt Mel Gibson might have overdone the aesthetics and the acting. Why would the captors of Jesus treat Him so grossly? However, after reading Isaiah's account of the suffering servant, and the Gospel accounts

of the crucifixion, I came to understand how Jesus was manhandled and treated before His death.

*See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness (Isaiah 52:13-14)*

The suffering servant is a theme that appears a couple of times in Isaiah's writings. In Isaiah 52 and 53, we get an overview of how the suffering servant was treated, his death, the shame and the glory he secured after going through such a painful death. The depiction of who the suffering servant is remains contentious in many Jewish communities. However, for Christians, we have no doubt that this person was fully revealed through the suffering and death of Jesus. In fact, Jesus Himself and the apostles made reference to some of the quotes in Isaiah 52 and 53. As we prepare to celebrate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is important we dig into the suffering servant and consider how this prophecy aligns with Jesus. Isaiah 52:13 states this: “See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted



up and highly exalted.” Then it continues with “Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness—” (Isaiah 52:14). These two verses reveal the glory and the suffering of the servant.

The painful experiences of the suffering servant should remind us of the pain God endured seeing His only begotten Son maltreated by the people He created. Yet, it was necessary for God to show us His unfailing love so that our redemption will be secured. Maybe like me, you still find it difficult to watch Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* because of the bloody nature of the movie. We can consider aesthetics displayed in the movie but in reality, the Son of God was disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness (Isaiah 52:14). It wasn't a rosy journey to the cross. Our Lord Jesus suffered so much pain and shame. In all this, He knew no sin. In the subsequent chapters, we shall go deeply into the nature of suffering meted out to the servant described in Isaiah 52 and 53.

## CHAPTER 2

# WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR MESSAGE?

Isaiah's prophecies concerning the suffering servant who was ultimately personified in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was given over 700 years before the incident happened. God had revealed to Isaiah what will be done to His begotten Son, who was referred to as the suffering servant in Isaiah's writings. The details and the accuracy of the prophecies couldn't have come from a human source other than a divine source. In chapter 1, we established that there is no doubt that Jesus and the suffering servant are the same. We also established that the painful experiences of Jesus were to demonstrate God's unfailing love for us. Now let's dig deeper.

*Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? (Isaiah 53:1)*

Isaiah 53:1 begins with this message: “Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord

been revealed?” This question poses a significant problem: the unbelieving people and their refusal to accept the message of the Lord. As Isaiah wrote this, the Jews who lived prior to the ministry of Jesus might have confidently confessed that they would never disbelieve the message of God. It is possible that some even considered that this was a message for their enemies who have failed to acknowledge God. The cry goes: “Who has believed our message?”. Other versions say, “our report”. The tendency of the Israelites to disbelieve the message of the gospel was the reason behind this question.

The second part of the question asks, “to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” The arm of the Lord was revealed to the Israelites, but they failed to accept the message of salvation. In their refusal, they even went ahead and plotted the death of the Saviour. In the book of John 12:37-38, we see an interesting trend: “Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” The apostle John

considered the disbelief on the part of the Jews as a fulfillment of prophecy.

In his letter to the Romans, apostle Paul also mentioned that “But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” (Romans 10:16). The culmination of their disbelief was the pain and suffering meted out on God's Son. Even till date, there are many others who have refused to believe in our report. Quite disheartening is the fact that most of such people will rather believe in any historical person except Jesus Christ.

Even though there are many convincing proofs about Jesus Christ, these people simply refuse to believe and receive Him. Their rejection and refusal to believe has made them alienated from the truth. The redemptive work of Christ is only important to those who receive and believe Him. John 1:12 states that “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Until people believe in the message, receive Jesus and believe in His name, they do not have any portion in the Lord.

Spend time praying for family and friends who have rejected the message of salvation. Ask God to open doors of opportunities for you and others to share with them the message of the gospel. Make an intentional effort to show them love, care and compassion.

## CHAPTER 3

### HE WAS DESPISED

Rejection of any sort is quite unpleasant and uncomfortable. Imagine being in a new place and realizing that because of your appearance, skin colour, race, beliefs, faith, etc. people tend to stay away from you. This could be disheartening and for some people rejection from the people close to them can cause them to have certain emotional traumas. God loves the world but consistently, some people in the world have rejected Him and all that He stands for. Others seem to believe in God but fail to accept His only begotten Son. The truth is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one and rejection of any automatically means the rejection of all. As we continue our discussion on the suffering servant, let's focus on His rejection in this chapter.

*He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. (Isaiah 53:3)*

In Isaiah's Messianic prophecies, he stated that, “He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.” (Isaiah 53:2-3). This description indicates that the servant had no beauty or majesty and even his appearance was not desirable.

In addition to this, the servant was despised, rejected, suffered, experienced pain, people hid from him, and he was lowly esteemed. In fact, these details are best seen in the entire earthly life of Jesus. From His birth to His death, Jesus faced diverse forms of rejection. As a baby, Herod sought for Him to kill Him. During His ministry, the religious leaders hated Him with all Passion and plotted His death. He suffered pain and brutality in the hands of the Roman soldiers, and He was crucified. Crucifixion was the kind of death sentence reserved for criminals. Thus, though Jesus knew no sin, He died like a criminal with two thieves by His sides.

As if these were not enough, even after His death, hatred for Him and the rejection of His ministry led the discontented religious leaders to arrange for soldiers to guard His tomb. What at all did Jesus do to deserve all these? The deep contempt for Him has not ceased even till date. Although Jesus resurrected victoriously and is seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for us, His followers are still despised all over the world. In some lands, allegiance to Christianity means a death sentence. In some cities, Christians are ostracized, banned from taking part in community engagements, denied basic human rights, expelled, killed, and even considered as the lowliest members of society. Yet, in all these, we believers are still more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).

If because of your faith in Christ, you have become susceptible to be despised by family and friends, know that our Lord and Saviour faced the same predicament. Instead of returning their rejection with anger and resentment, continue to show love, care and compassion. We gain nothing if we keep hating those who hate us.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:16 (KJV) “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore



wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” We have been sent forth and being despised and rejected is no excuse for us to quit. We are the sheep in the midst of wolves. We need the wisdom of the serpent and dove to survive.

## CHAPTER 4

### HE WAS PIERCED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS

I am yet to encounter someone who desires to only be in pain. In fact, if there are such people, they might probably be going through mental issues. Pain of any kind is not desirable. Physical pain, mental pain, emotional pain among other sorts of pain has the potential to damage people and leave permanent scars if not treated well. Several countries have introduced measures to mitigate excruciating pain meted upon criminals. We now have milder correctional measures as compared with excruciating punishment. Thus, even for criminals, society has become more lenient and liberal in the way the criminal is handled. Of course, punitive punishments are still exercised in other countries of the world. Imagine the punishment for evil doers and criminals in ancient times. Your guess is as good as mine. There was no mercy for the guilty. The innocent person who was wrongfully accused ended up with a severe punishment they did not deserve.

*Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)*

The sins of humanity alienated us from God. Any attempt to return to the Lord demanded that men sacrifice animals to atone for our sins. The only payment for our sins was the shedding of sinless blood. Unfortunately, the sin of Adam and Eve translated a sinful gene in humanity. Thus, even the innocent baby was born with the defective sinful gene. The only way out was for God to send His only begotten Son, the one without sin to permanently pay for our sins. In doing so, whoever believes in the finished work of the Son of God is delivered from sin and its punishment.

In the account of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, the Messianic prophecy mentions that, “Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on

him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4-5). This depiction of the servant aligns with the way Jesus was crucified.

Even Pilate found nothing to condemn Jesus to death. Herod just made fun of Jesus. However, the religious leaders were certain that Jesus had to die. In the words of Caiaphas, the high priest, it was better for them that one man died for the people than that the whole nation perish (John 11:50). Jesus became the lamb that was sacrificed for the sins of the world. He took the pain associated with our sinfulness and bore our suffering. Yet, the religious leaders and the unbelieving people saw Jesus' crucifixion as a punishment from God. They laughed at Him and mocked Him. Some even hurled insults on Him and dared Him to descend from the cross if He was the Son of God.

On the cross, Jesus was pierced, and water and blood gushed out. He was separated from His Father when the load of all humanity's sin was laid on Him. Jesus cried “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:3). The Father took His face away from His Son because at the height of crucifixion, Jesus embodied the sins of all humanity

including that of Adam and Eve, mine, and yours. The cross became a symbol of divine exchange, but the price Jesus paid was the fact He bore the punishment of our sins.

No wonder, prior to His death, Jesus instituted the Holy Communion to remind us of the price He paid. As we partake of the body and blood of Jesus, Paul reminds us to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26). Through Jesus, the prophecy of the suffering servant is fulfilled. He was pierced for our transgressions so we will be free from the punishment we deserved. Thank you Jesus!

## CHAPTER 5

### HE WAS LED LIKE A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

Have you ever been to an abattoir (Slaughterhouse)? What was your experience if you had been to an abattoir? The animals who are sent to the abattoir have no choice. They cannot complain about being turned to meat. They enter the abattoir alive and are returned as packaged or prepared meat. In other words, no cow or lamb can boldly tell the owner that it doesn't want to be sent to the abattoir. However, we do not treat humans like that. Even the worst-case criminals are given the opportunity to defend themselves. Once again, we also know that in some nations, free and fair trials don't exist so as soon as a person is declared guilty, their fate is like that of the lamb to the slaughter.

*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)*

As we continue to analyze the suffering servant in Isaiah's Messianic prophecies, let's consider verse 7 of Isaiah 53: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." This verse paints an image of a helpless lamb being taken to the slaughterhouse. We also see the image of a sheep during shearing. Neither the lamb before its slaughter nor the sheep before its shearers complain, protest, or argue with their owners.

These two metaphors in Isaiah's Messianic prophecies align with how Jesus was handled a few hours before He was crucified. The arrest of Jesus, the unfair trials before the Sanhedrin, before Pilate and Herod among the people who insulted Him, treated him with scorn and derision, flogged him, etc. all culminated in the way Jesus was wrongfully treated. In all these, like a lamb to the slaughter, Jesus did not protect. Like a sheep before its shearers, He didn't open His mouth when they hurled insults on Him.

What did the Son of God do to deserve this unfair treatment? He did nothing! The life of Jesus was poured as

the sacrificial offering required to atone the sins of all humanity and to restore the fallen man back to God. When Isaiah's prophecy was given years ago, the people might have wondered why this servant had to experience all these unfair treatments. Yet, when the religious leaders caused the arrest of Jesus, they thought they were defending their religion and saving Israel from a false prophet and a false teacher. They saw Jesus' ministry as an indictment on their religious statuses and beliefs. They were defending Judaism, so they thought. However, in doing so, they became the accusers of their own Saviour. They plotted, orchestrated, and killed the one who was sent to redeem them. But, in the perfect will of God, His Son, the suffering servant would be killed to atone for the sins of the world.

In Luke's account, after Jesus was arrested, "the men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophesy! Who hit you?" And they said many other insulting things to him." (Luke 22:63-65).

Matthew recorded that before the Sanhedrin, it was agreed that Jesus is worthy of death: "Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and



said, “Prophesy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?” (Matthew 26:66-68).

Mark also adds that, “then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again, the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” (Mark 14:60-61).

“You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophesy!” And the guards took him and beat him. (Mark 14:64-65).

Our redemption didn't come on a platter. Jesus went through so much pain to rescue us from the clutches of sin, temptation, and death. Don't allow your actions to make null of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. The price has been paid and we have the opportunity to live right.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **HE WAS CUT OFF FROM THE LAND OF THE LIVING**

The story of George Junius Stinney Jr. is mind blowing and baffles me even till date. Born on October 21, 1929, and killed on June 16, 1944, this 14 year old black boy was convicted and then executed in a proceeding later considered as an unfair trial. He was accused of the murders of two young white girls in March 1944. He had an unfair trial, was convicted, sentenced to death, and executed by electric chair in June 1944. At age 14, George Junius Stinney Jr. was the youngest American with an exact birth date confirmed to be both sentenced to death and executed in the 20th century. 70 years after this trial, he was found to be innocent of the charges and exonerated. Although this news is good, George's life had already been cut off from the land of the living. His innocence only makes a shift in history, it doesn't restore him back to the life that was taken away from him. Imagine how a legal blunder denied a family of a son. Who knows what he would have been if his life wasn't taken

away from him. This story reminds me of the description of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53.

*By oppression and judgement he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. (Isaiah 53:8)*

In Isaiah's Messianic prophecies, the reader is presented with the state of affairs of the suffering servant. Isaiah 53:8 quotes that “By oppression and judgement he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people, he was punished.” First, the servant was oppressed through an unfair trial, a judgement that favoured his accusers. No one protested that his trial was unfair. This unfair trial led to a death sentence and ultimately the suffering servant was cut off from the land of the living. He was punished for a crime he didn't commit. The punishment meant for others was laid on Him.

This is like the case of George Junius Stinney Jr. who bore the sentence that was meant for the real murderer or murderers of the two white girls. Death ends one's life in the

land of the living. As believers, we know that it is appointed unto men to die once and after death, there is judgement (Hebrews 9:27). While one is alive, there is room to make amends, but death ceases all that. No one deserves to bear the punishment meant for another. Each life is important to God. Don't ever be a partaker of wrong accusations. Let your "Yes" be "Yes" and your "No" be "No".

However, God in His infinite and unfailing love for us considered the death of His only begotten Son as the best way to atone for the sins of all humanity. Your sins, my sins, and the sins of everyone was paid for on the cross of calvary by Jesus. Jesus' life was cut from the land of the living. As the blood of the sinless Son touched the ground, the earth shook, darkness covered the face of the earth, even the holiest place on earth couldn't stand still and thus, the curtain dividing the holy of holies from the holy place was torn into two.

As a result, the earthly high priest shifted from the Levitical priesthood to the Son of God. Hebrews 9:11-12 attest that "But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with

human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”

Let us ponder over this: “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” (Hebrews 9:15)

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **HIS DEATH AND BURIAL**

Growing up in Ghana, it was very common to distinguish between the grave of the rich and that of the poor. In fact, some rich families go the extra mile to build monuments at the grave site of their loved ones. Thus, even in death, it was common then to distinguish between the rich and the poor. According to my mum, a few years ago, it was even common to bury people with expensive golden accessories like necklaces, bracelets, and rings. Whatever these dead people needed this jewelry for, possibly was known to those who believed in that. Even the funeral and memorial services for the rich were done differently from that of the poor. Ultimately, it felt like being poor on earth is tantamount to entering your grave with poverty.

However, we know from scripture that it is possible for the poor to enjoy riches and glories in the afterlife while the rich suffer in pain (see Luke 16:19-31). The way one lives on earth determines their life after death. The plush funerals and the luxurious grave decors don't change one's final destination.

*He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.  
(Isaiah 53:9)*

In Isaiah's Messianic prophecy of the suffering servant, we identify the final interment of the servant. First, we have seen how this innocent servant (personified in Jesus Christ) died for the transgression of many people. According to Isaiah 53: 9, “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.” We identify two different groups at the death and burial of the servant: the wicked and the rich.

The nature of death assigned to the suffering servant's death was the punishment for the wicked. He was condemned as a criminal even though he was innocent. No wonder he was assigned a grave with the wicked. In the manifestation of this prophecy, we identify that the condemned Jesus Christ was crucified together with two thieves. These thieves were men who had committed several crimes and their crucifixion was a punishment for their wickedness. Yet, Jesus, the Son of God was assigned the

same punishment and He died like an ordinary criminal crucified together with the wicked. Jesus was hanged on the cross meant for the wicked and He died in between two thieves.

Again, the destination of this suffering servant in his death was with the wicked and the rich: “assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.” Thus, in another instance, the dead servant was given a rich man's burial after his death. Let's consider this in the death and burial of Jesus. After Jesus was confirmed dead, two important people collaborated to give Him a burial fitting for the rich. In Mark 15:43 we identify that “Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.” John's account adds that Joseph of Arimathea “was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was



crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.” (John 19:39-41).

Both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were prominent people in the society. They were men of influence and rich as well. Jesus was laid in a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. Jesus was buried by rich and influential people and laid in a new tomb.

In His death and burial, the suffering servant interacted with the rich and the wicked. Similarly, Jesus also interacted with the rich and the wicked in His life, ministry, and death. Our Saviour died for people of all walks of life. He died for the rich, the poor, the wicked, the neglected among many others. As we navigate life, we need to understand that irrespective of our current state, the price has already been paid for our sins.

## **CHAPTER 8**

# **HIS SUFFERING WAS THE WILL OF GOD**

The joy of most parents is to see their children excel in life and become needful in the society. Very few parents desire that their children suffer and go through extreme and excessive pain. For some parents even seeing their children leave the house to boarding institutions, work in a new city, join the army, leave to their marital homes etc. could be a hard thing for them to grasp. Our desire is to be protective, caring and show our deepest love for children sometimes clouds us so much that any decision our children make with a potential to harm them is strongly opposed.

On the average, the majority of parents will strongly oppose any form of action that has the potential to hurt or bring pain to their children. God the Father's only begotten Son was Jesus Christ. When humanity fell into sin, the only way back to God was through sacrifice and atonement. The price God paid for our redemption was the life of His only begotten Son. Imagine the atrocities that were meted out on God's Son. Jesus being fully aware that whatever He had to

experience was so that humanity would be redeemed never protested nor opposed the Father's will.

*Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10)*

As we continue our discussion on the suffering servant, we need to understand why the servant went through all that was described in the Messianic prophecy. According to Isaiah 53:10, “it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.” The suffering of this servant was not coincidental nor was it an accidental suffering. It was the will of the Lord to “crush him and cause him to suffer.” And in so doing, “the Lord makes his life an offering for sin.” Ultimately, the offspring of the Lord will be seen, and the days of the servant will be prolonged because the will of God will prosper.

Thus, the servant's ultimate mission was to satisfy the Lord's will. These prophetic words came to pass in the life, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ. John 3 :16 summarizes this: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

The crucifixion of Jesus was a tough experience considering the fact that the people Jesus came to save didn't make his death an easy journey. He was beaten, ridiculed, and ultimately crucified. Yet, His death was God's will for restoration. Jesus did not just pay the price, He Himself was the price. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has brought to God many other brothers and sisters including me and you. The family of God has expanded because the death of Jesus has brought many more people to the saving knowledge of God. The price has already been paid, let's go out there and bring in more brothers and sisters. There is more room for more people. Everyone is welcome!

## CHAPTER 9

### HE WILL JUSTIFY MANY

My favourite part of the Easter weekend is Easter Sunday, the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even as a child, I could not stand movies on the arrest, trial, and death of Jesus. Irrespective of how mild the movie producers garnish the story; my heart will still be in pain even long after the movie is over. I remember the day my cousin played the role of Jesus in a Church drama. I was so sad even though I knew that the whole drama was an act and not real.

Yet, I have also seen videos of people making mockery of the crucifixion. Even if such people do not believe in Jesus as the Son of God, the historical facts about His death should be enough to stop them from making mockery of someone's painful experiences. However, when the Lord Jesus is revealed to the naysayers and the mockers, the same people turn around and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. The good news is, Jesus never rejects anyone who genuinely turns to Him. Irrespective of the person's past treatment of the gospel, Jesus accepts them all.

*After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)*

The suffering servant in Isaiah 53, fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus (as seen in the gospels), embodied pain that led to the ransom of many. Throughout this series, we have identified the diverse pains the servant endured. Physical pain, emotional pain and even separation from the Father. Yet, this was not the end of the servant's story. Isaiah 53:11 states that "After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities." Let's dig deeper into this verse.

**After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied-** The suffering of the servant was not going to be permanent, there was going to be an end to it. After being cut off from the land of the living (Isaiah 58:8), he will not stay in the darkness of the deep forever. He will see the light of life and be satisfied. This symbolizes the restoration of

life into the servant. Thus, death was not going to be the end but a means to pay the price for the transgression of many.

We see this manifested in Jesus' own death. The religious leaders thought that crucifixion was the way to get rid of Him. Little did they know that His death was the way to fulfill prophecy and redeem humanity. Even the guards they posted at the tomb did not prevent Jesus from coming out of the tomb alive (see Matthew 28). The life that was cut short was restored and Jesus saw the light of life. He was satisfied because His death “cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Colossians 2:14-15).

**by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities-** After seeing the light of life, the suffering servant will become an epitome of justification and the propitiation of the iniquities of many. Thus, those who come to the knowledge of the work of the servant will be justified and their own sins will be forgiven.

In the ministry of Jesus, we see that the resurrection of Jesus opened the door to our salvation. John 1:12-13 presents it this way: “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” Therefore, the wages of sin, which is death, was paid for through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those who come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ are justified. Even if their sins are red as crimson, they are justified and made as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). We no longer must bear the load of sin, but Jesus has paid the price. We are the children of God!

We have been set free from the punishment we deserved. Jesus had paid it all. It will be greed on our part to keep to ourselves the salvation we have received. Let's be generous enough to share with others the way to salvation. Pray for your unbelieving friends and family and ask God for opportunities to share your faith. Let your life become a shining light that will attract people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We have been saved to save others!



## **CHAPTER 10**

### **HE WILL HAVE A PORTION AMONG THE GREAT**

Whenever a group of people collaborate to do a project or to build a business, the proceeds are divided among the members of the group depending on the amount of one's investment and how they were involved in the overall success of the project. In the same way, when someone employs another person for a task, the job contract spells out what the person will receive for performing the tasks assigned to them. The employee might not have invested into the project but performing assigned tasks and responsibilities qualifies the employee to enjoy “portions” of the firm.

In Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the bags of gold reminds us that it is important to become profitable even when employed by another person. To get a portion of the master's possession, whatever is entrusted to you must yield profit. The unprofitable servant in Matthew 25 was thrown into the outer darkness where there was much weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30).

*Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great [kings and rulers], and He shall divide the spoil with the mighty, because He poured out His life unto death, and [He let Himself] be regarded as a criminal and be numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore [and took away] the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors (the rebellious). (Isaiah 53:12 AMPC)*

In the account of the suffering servant as recorded in Isaiah 53, we are told that the servant will have a portion among the great. This was after the servant had undergone all the pain, atrocities, insults and even death. Isaiah 53:12 state this: “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great [kings and rulers], and He shall divide the spoil with the mighty, because He poured out His life unto death, and [He let Himself] be regarded as a criminal and be numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore [and took away] the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors (the rebellious).” (Isaiah 53:12 AMPC).

The AMPC version explains further that the servant will have his portion with kings and rulers (the great) and he shall also divide the spoils with the mighty. This would be

possible because the servant “poured out His life unto death and [He let Himself] be regarded as a criminal and be numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore [and took away] the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors (the rebellious).” The portion assigned to the servant was by merit of the sacrifice he did.

In the New Testament, Jesus quoted this verse when He was talking about Himself and the task ahead of Him. At the last supper with His disciples, Jesus poured His heart out to His disciples and informed them of what lies ahead of Him and them. In Luke 22:37, Jesus said, “It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.” Jesus knew that the suffering servant had to be numbered with transgressors (sinners, rebellious, wicked people etc.), yet He did not reject His task. Being in the image of God, He knew what He was about to face. None of the atrocities done to Him came as a surprise. He knew all men, and nothing was hidden from Him. Yet, He boldly fulfilled His task without complaining and murmuring. He poured out His life unto death and in doing so, made intercession for transgressors.

Jesus had the power to refuse death, but He was humble and obedient even unto death. No wonder, He was assigned a portion with kings, rulers and the mighty. Philippians 2:9-11 declares that “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The name Jesus is the name above all names because He has been exalted for fulfilling the task assigned to Him. In the same way, those who believe in Jesus and share in His suffering will also share in His glory (Romans 8:17).

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **HE IS RISEN!**

The empty tomb reminds us of the Resurrection Power of Christ. Before Jesus' arrest, the Jews questioned Him about driving the merchant from the temple, "The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" (John 2:18). Jesus gave a prophetic and symbolic reply, "Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken" (John 2:19-22).

The disciples were traumatized by the arrest and subsequent death of Jesus. Their Master in whom they trusted had been killed. What is their fate? They fled from the Garden of Gethsemane and few others followed from afar. Since Jesus died on the eve of the Sabbath day and the eve of the Passover (John 19:14), there was barely enough

time for the followers to attend to His body. However, scripture records that with permission from Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took Jesus' body and wrapped it in about seventy-five pounds worth of burial spices in accordance with Jewish custom (see John 19:39-40). But neither the swords and the nails of the Roman soldiers nor the seventy-five pounds load of spices could lay the Saviour down. The burial clothes could not tie him either for on the third day, He arose triumphantly and in glory.

*He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. (Matthew 28:6)*

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary visited the tomb on the third day but to their surprise, the tomb was empty. Jesus was not there nor were the soldiers who were planted to keep watch. Out of awe, the soldiers fled to the city when they saw the power of the Resurrection. The women met an angel at the tomb who told them, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his

disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (Matthew 28:5-8).

Happy Easter and may we experience the resurrected Christ in His fullest.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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