Sunday, March 29, 2020

**Lesson:** Isaiah 52:13-53:12; **Time of Action:** 700-695 B.C.; **Place of Action:** Jerusalem

**Golden Text:** “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” (Isaiah 53:6).

I. INTRODUCTION. We are seldom, if ever, called upon to experience vicarious suffering, that is, suffering done on behalf of someone else. This was the nature of Jesus’ suffering. It was suffering done for others. Isaiah’s prophecy in this week’s lesson was delivered around seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, yet the accuracy of the prophecy concerning the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus is striking. As the Prophet Isaiah looked ahead to the Messiah, he saw Him as the suffering Servant.

II. THE BACKGROUND FOR THE LESSON. The book of Isaiah is the first of the writings of the Prophets in the Bible, and Isaiah, the author, is generally considered to be the greatest prophet. The events given in chapters 1-39 occurred during Isaiah’s ministry around 700 B.C. and chapters 40-66 may have been written near the end of his life about 681 B.C.
Isaiah was God’s special messenger to Judah, the southern kingdom. But the first 39 chapters of the book, generally carry the message of judgment to Judah, Israel (the northern kingdom), and the surrounding pagan nations to repent of their sins. Judah had a form of godliness, but in their hearts they were corrupt. Isaiah’s warnings were intended to purify the people by helping them understand God’s true nature and message. However, they ignored the repeated warnings that Isaiah brought. The last 27 chapters, 40-66 generally bring a message of forgiveness, comfort, and hope for the nation. The message of hope looks forward to the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah speaks more about the Messiah than does any other Old Testament prophet. He describes the Messiah as both a suffering servant and a sovereign LORD. Our lesson this week vividly depicts God’s anointed Suffering Servant whom we know today to be our LORD Jesus Christ. It is taken from Isaiah chapters 52 and 53.

III. THE EXALTED SERVANT (Isaiah 52:13-15)

A. The appearance of the Servant (Isaiah 52:13). Our first verse says “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.” Here God indicates that when the Messiah came, He would be both appointed and qualified for His mission. We know that He was appointed to His mission because God describes Him as “my servant.” This means that Messiah does His Father’s will, seeks His Father’s honour, and serves the interests of His Father’s kingdom. He is also qualified for
His mission as seen in the words, “he shall deal prudently,” that is, He will act wisely by doing God’s will (see Isaiah 11:2). This would include much suffering, but the Servant’s reward would be His threefold exaltation; He will be “exalted and extolled, and be very high.” These three exaltations are really synonyms emphasizing that God’s “Servant” will be given the highest position unlike any other human being ever has or ever will (see Philippians 2:7-9).


1. (vs. 14). This verse says “As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men...” In the previous verse, God sees the Servant as being successful in His mission and rewarded with a high position. Here, a different view of the Servant is given. From a human standpoint He is seen as suffering great abuse. Speaking as if the Servant had already come, God first said “As many were astonied at thee...” In other words, many people were astonished or amazed at His appearance. This was because “his visage was so marred more than any man.” The term “visage” refers to a person’s facial features and the word “marred” here means “to disfigure.” In other words, as a result of the severe beatings Jesus took in the court of the high priest (see Matthew 26:67-68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64), His face was disfigured “more than any man.” This made Him almost unrecognizable. In addition, “his form,” meaning His physical appearance had been damaged “more than the sons of men” or any human being. This would happen as a result of the merciless
scourging or beatings Jesus would receive from the Roman authorities including being forced to wear a crown of thorns (see Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1). When Jesus took upon Him “the form of a servant” (see Philippians 2:6-8), He would be treated more barbarously than any other human being.

2. (vs. 15). This verse says “So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.” Over the centuries, scholars have debated the meaning of this verse. We can’t be sure, but the phrase “So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him” seems to refer to the gospel age. There appears to be a literal fulfillment of this phrase in I Peter 1:1-2, where people of many nations are described as having been “sprinkled” with the blood of Jesus Christ. The word translated “sprinkle” here is commonly used in the Pentateuch (The first five books of the Bible) to describe the cleansing of the vessels in the temple when the priests “sprinkled” blood or water upon them (see Hebrews 10:22). So the Servant is here pictured doing the priestly work of “sprinkling” the nations during the millennium, when “kings” will flock to Him in awe (see Isaiah 11:10; Romans 15:12). During the millennium, the great ones of the Gentile nations shall show Him respect for “Kings shall shut their mouths at him,” that is, they shall not open “their mouths” against Him, as they had previously done to contradict and blaspheme His sacred oracles. They shall acquiesce and be well pleased with the methods Christ takes
in setting up His kingdom in the world. God continued to say “for that which had not been told them shall they see.” In other words, the mystery which was kept secret from the beginning of the world shall by Christ be “made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (see Romans 16:25-26). The preaching of the gospel brings to light new and unheard of things which will get the attention and engage the reverence of “kings” and kingdoms (see Romans 15:20-21). The last phrase of this verse says “and that which they had not heard shall they consider.” Just as the things now revealed had long been kept secret, the persons to whom they were revealed had long been kept in the dark. But the time will come when “kings” or world leaders shall “see” and “consider” the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, which before they “had not been told” or they had not heard. In essence, what was previously unknown to the “kings” or leaders of the world will be made known to them by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

IV. THE SORROWFUL SERVANT (Isaiah 53:1-6)

A. The rhetorical question (Isaiah 53:1). This verse says “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” The pronoun “our” as well refers to the prophets who sorrowfully lamented the nation’s rejection of the Messiah’s message. Therefore, the words “our report” refer to the preaching that Israel heard from God’s messengers in their midst. The answer to the question, “Who hath believed our report?” is no one. No
one would believe that God would allow His Servant, the Messiah to suffer the way He would. **Note:** While Isaiah 53 refers to unbelief in general, it specifically refers to the unbelieving population in Israel and the nations during the worldwide witness of the saved remnant during the Tribulation (see Matthew 24:14). At Jesus’ first advent, the message concerning Him was clearly proclaimed and reinforced by His miracles, but it was not received as the truth (see John 12:37). Jesus offered salvation to Israel and some individual Jews became disciples, but the religious leaders of Israel adamantly rejected Him. The unbelief of the Jews at that time is expressly said to be the fulfillment of the question “Who hath believed our report?” (see John 12:38). It is also applied to the little success the apostles’ preaching had among Jews and Gentiles (see Romans 10:16). Unfortunately, of the many people who hear the “report” of the gospel there are few, very few, who believe it even though it is reported openly and publicly. It’s not whispered in a corner, or confined to religious schools, but it is proclaimed to all. The gospel is such a faithful message and so well “worthy of all acceptation” (see I Timothy 1:15), that one would think it would be universally received and believed. But it is quite the opposite; few believed the prophets who spoke before of Christ. When He came, none of the rulers and only a hand full of Pharisees followed Him (see Matthew 27:57; John 3:1; 19:38-39; Acts 23:6); and when the apostles carried this gospel “report” all over the known world, some in every place believed (see I Corinthians 1:2), but comparatively very few. To this day, of the many people who profess to
believe this “report,” the gospel message, there are few who really embrace it and submit to the power of it. The second question was “and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” The “arm of the Lord” speaks of God’s power (see Isaiah 52:10). People didn’t believe the “report” of the gospel, because “the arm of the Lord” was not “revealed” to them; they didn’t discern, nor did they acknowledge the divine power that goes along with the Word. Most Israelites didn’t believe that God’s power came down to earth to bring salvation through the risen Servant.

B. The root (Isaiah 53:2). This verse says “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.” Instead of the powerful deliverer Israel expected, they likened Him to “a tender plant.” The prophet says here that the Messiah “shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.” The pronoun “him” refers to the Father. Earlier, when speaking of the house of David, Isaiah prophesied that “a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (see Isaiah 11:1). Jesus would appear as a “tender” insignificant shoot arising from a humble family of Davidic ancestry. He sprang from the arid land of Israel like “a root out of a dry ground.” A “tender plant” that grows out of “dry ground” is not very impressive, and neither was Jesus’ appearance. Jesus, being likened to “a root out of a dry ground,” means that He was born of a lowly family in the north, in Galilee, a family out of which, like “a dry” and desert ground, nothing green, nothing great, was expected,
especially in a town where it was thought that no good thing could come out of it (see John 1:46). The prophet also said that “he hath no form nor comeliness” meaning that there was nothing physically outstanding about the Messiah. Some people attract others to themselves by virtue of their physical appearance. The Servant would not appear to be majestic or particularly attractive. The believing remnant of Israel then summarized Jesus’ rejection saying “and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

Those who were around Jesus, could not get past the outer appearance to “see” what Jesus was really like. Their dependence on outward attractiveness brings to mind the reason why the people had been impressed with King Saul (see I Samuel 9:2; 10:20-24). In contrast, God was chiefly interested in a ruler’s heart (see I Samuel 16:7). Are we guilty of overlooking some very special people simply because we cannot get past superficial surface appearances?

Note: Being generally apt to judge people and things by the sight of the eye, and according to outward appearance, the Israelites saw “no beauty” in Jesus that would make them “desire Him.” However, there was a great deal of true “beauty” in Him, the “beauty” of holiness and the “beauty of goodness,” was enough to see Him as “the desire of all nations” (see Haggai 2:7). But the far greater part of those among whom He lived and conversed saw none of this “beauty,” because it was spiritually discerned (see I Corinthians 2:14). Carnal hearts see no excellency in the Lord Jesus, nothing that would cause them to “desire” an acquaintance with Him or show interest in Him.
C. The rejection (Isaiah 53:3). This verse says “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.” The reaction to Jesus went beyond simply ignoring Him. “He is despised and rejected of men.” Israel as a whole, and its leaders in particular “despised and rejected” the Servant. The word “despised” means “to treat with contempt.” The same word is used to describe Esau’s refusal of his birthright (see Genesis 25:34). The fact that Jesus was “rejected of men” means that He was forsaken (see Luke 4:28-29; John 6:66). In the Hebrew, the expression “rejected of men” means “He lacked men.” The Servant is also described as “a man of sorrows” meaning that He felt pain. In addition, He was “acquainted with grief.” This means that He was familiar with sickness and disease. There is no record that Jesus was ever sick Himself, but He was in nearly constant contact with those who suffered from various forms of sickness. The statement “and we hid as it were our faces from him” means that the people saw Jesus as so repulsive that they turned away from Him. He was so repulsive that the people responded to Him the way they would to a leper. No doubt, the “sorrows” and “grief” that characterized Jesus’ entire life made Him repulsive to the people. To emphasize just how much the people treated Jesus with contempt, the term “despised” is used twice. The phrase “and we esteemed him not” means that He was seen as having no value and not worthy of respect.

D. The reversal (Isaiah 53:4-6).
1. (vs. 4). This verse says “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” The word “Surely” reveals a change in Israel’s understanding. It introduces a discussion of what really took place and that the Servant’s suffering and death were purposeful and not happenstance. Again, the prophet speaks in the past tense as if what he’s about to say had already happened. In the mind of God, it had. Part of Jesus’ purpose in coming was that “he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” Both “griefs” and “sorrows” are the consequences of sin, and convey the idea of Jesus taking them upon Himself and carrying them away. Peter wrote that Jesus in “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (see I Peter 2:24). This is the concept of substitution which the Jews failed to understand about Jesus. After all, the law stated, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (see Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23). The Jews, failure to understand the concept of substitution, and the true nature of Jesus’ suffering caused them to “esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” Those who rejected Jesus wrongly assumed that He suffered because of His own sin as punishment from “God.”

2. (vs. 5). This verse says “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.” Here we have further examples of the concept of the substitutionary work of Jesus. He died for our sins; that is He took upon Himself the punishment that we deserved because of our sin. Four
statements describe the Servant’s suffering on our behalf. First, “he was wounded for our transgressions.” The term “wounded” in Hebrew means “pierced” which speaks of Jesus’ wounds on the cross caused by nails and a spear (see Zechariah 12:10). His suffering would be for our “transgressions,” that is, acts of rebellion against God and His Word. Second, “he was bruised for our iniquities.” The word “bruised” means “crushed” and implies physical death. The Hebrew word translated “iniquities” comes from a verb root that means “to bend,” “to make crooked,” or “to distort.” From this came the meaning of acting perversely or sinning. So, He was crushed for our sins. The third statement that describes the Servant’s suffering is, “the chastisement of our peace was upon him.” The word “chastisement” comes from a verb meaning “to discipline.” The Servant took upon Himself the corrective steps (suffering and death) taken by God to restore “peace” between Himself and wayward humanity (see Ephesians 2:14-17; II Corinthians 5:21). Finally, the fourth description of the Servant’s suffering is “with his stripes we are healed.” The term “stripes” refer to contusions and other marks caused by scourging (see Matthew 27:26) and beating (see Matthew 27:30). Note: Scourging refers to an investigation of a prisoner that began with his beating (see Acts 22:24). The scourging was done using a whip with a handle and with one or more leather cords or thongs attached to it. Sometimes these cords were knotted or weighted with pieces of metal or bone to make the whip more effective as a flesh-cutting instrument. The Hebrew word translated “healed” comes from a verb that literally means to sew together, to mend, or
to repair. “Healed” here refers to spiritual healing and therefore to the gift of spiritual life that the Servant provided for sinners by dying on the cross (see Romans 6:23; II Corinthians 5:21). Two benefits come to those who believe Isaiah’s report concerning the suffering Servant—“peace” with God, and spiritual healing or eternal life. Each of us carries a load of “iniquities” that makes it impossible to have “peace” with God. Punishment must be meted out if we are to have that “peace.”

3. (vs. 6). This verse says “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.” The focus of this passage briefly changes from the Servant’s death to the behavior of mankind that caused it. Speaking on behalf of the Israelites the prophet said “All we like sheep have gone astray.” The word “All” indicates that the indictment includes everyone both Jews and Gentiles (see Romans 3:10-12). The idea of straying “sheep” pictures sinners as helpless and unaware of how vulnerable they are. The fallen or estranged human race, imitating the first parents, does not naturally seek fellowship with the true God. But instead “we have turned every one to his own way” which means that mankind has chosen to follow their own paths (see Romans 5:12). Sinners disobey God of their own free will, not because someone or something forces them to sin. They willfully choose not to enjoy the blessings of God’s green pastures. God’s holiness demands that sin be punished; but in His love for mankind, He provided a means for people to escape the justifiable wrath of God upon sin. Since punishment must be meted out for our sin, if we are to
have peace with God, “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” In other words, “the iniquity” or sins of Adam’s descendants, which includes all of mankind, fell harshly on the divine Servant who is our Substitute. Jesus’ suffering was vicarious or substitutionary—He took our place. As our Substitute, He paid a price we could never pay (see I Peter 1:18-19). He suffered the just penalty for sin which is death (see Ezekiel 18:4; 18:20; Romans 6:21, 23). The Hebrew verb translated “hath laid” means “to hit” or “to strike” violently. The idea here is that the blows of death fell not only on the Servant’s soul, but also on His body. The terminology used here sees “iniquity” as being capable of causing serious injury.

V. THE SUFFERING SERVANT (Isaiah 53:7-9)

**A. The silence (Isaiah 53:7).** This verse says, “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.” One of the things that we notice about Jesus’ suffering is that it was voluntary. He patiently endured being “oppressed, and...afflicted” by His tormentors. The Servant also suffered in silence for when “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.” The gospels recount Jesus’ refusal to defend Himself before Pilate (see Matthew 27:11-14; Mark 15:1-5), and Peter wrote that Jesus “when he was reviled, reviled not again...” (see I Peter 2:23). In the manner of a
“dumb” animal, “a lamb,” Jesus neither verbally objected nor offered any other resistance, yet “he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is dumb.” “Sheep” don’t resist the butcher, but go meekly to the slaughterhouse because they don’t recognize the deadly danger ahead. Likewise, the Servant was submissive to the suffering and death for which He had come into the world (see Mark 10:45). The Servant was treated like an animal, but He had full knowledge of His coming ordeal. Amazingly, He acted like “a lamb” as He faced His executioners, for He said nothing (see Mark 14:61; 15:5). To add more emphasis, the prophet said once again “yet he opened not his mouth.” Regardless of what it looked like, the Servant was not the victim of His circumstances; He was the victor over His circumstances (see John 10:17-18).

B. The sentence (Isaiah 53:8-9).

1. (vs. 8). This verse says “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.” The Servant’s failure to speak hastened the end sought by His enemies for “He was taken from prison and from judgment.” After His unjust oppression and mock trial, Jesus was “taken” away and “cut off out of the land of the living” by His death. The question “and who shall declare his generation?” has elicited different interpretations. It might simply mean that Jesus didn’t leave any descendants. However, this phrase can be translated,
“and who among His generation considered?” indicating that those who were present considered Jesus’ death to be unimportant. The people of that day didn’t realize that it was their sins that He was dying for; that He was suffering their punishment. Jesus’ generation didn’t consider what was happening to Him to be important, because it was “for the transgression of my (God’s) people was he stricken” or experienced such suffering.

2. (vs. 9). This verse says “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.” The fact that “he made his grave with the wicked” means that those who crucified Jesus intended by crucifying Him with two thieves (see Matthew 27:38) to bury Him “with the wicked” or with convicted criminals. This would have happened if Joseph of Arimathaea, a friend had not intervened. Because of his kindness, Jesus was placed “with the rich in his death.” This means that Joseph of Arimathaea was the rich man who provided his tomb for Jesus’ burial (see Matthew 27:57-60). Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled to the letter! Jesus was buried in a rich man’s tomb instead of with two thieves “because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” In other words, God the Father was the force behind this strange series of events, honoring His Son because no fault of any kind could be found in Him (see Luke 23:4, 14; John 18:38; 19:4, 6; 1 Peter 2:21-23).
VI. THE SATISFIED SERVANT (Isaiah 53:10-12)

A. The resurrected Servant (Isaiah 53:10-11).

1. (vs. 10). This verse says “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.” Although the Father glorified His Son in death, “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” This does not mean the Father took pleasure in the Son’s suffering, but recognizes that the suffering was part of God’s larger plan and His will was done (see John 8:29; Hebrews 10:7). God did not rejoice sadistically in watching His Son suffer terrible pain; instead, in these events God saw the accomplishing of His saving plan made in eternity past (see Ephesians 1:4), a plan that would be to “the praise of his glory” (see Ephesians 1:14). Note: What took place magnified God’s attributes—His grace, love, justice, righteousness, and sovereignty. Jesus’ substitutionary death enabled a holy God outraged by man’s sins to extend forgiveness to sinners and be just in the process. Isaiah also prophesied that “when thou (God) shalt make his (Jesus) soul an offering for sin, he (Jesus) shall see his seed.” The term “soul” can refer to the immaterial part of a person or to the whole person. Since Jesus’ physical sufferings are vividly described, here “soul” most likely refers to the whole person. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “offering for sin” was used for the trespass offering (see Leviticus 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6). This ritual
involved the offering of a slain animal by persons who had trespassed against God or their neighbors, as well as restitution. Jesus didn’t die only to bear all our punishments, but also at the same time to pay to God every debt we owed Him. But Jesus becoming “an offering for sin” or an “offering” for sinners’ trespasses was not the end, for the prophet went on to say “he shall see his seed.” Abraham’s “seed” (see Genesis 12:7) referred to Israel, and the fact that he would have innumerable physical “seed” was evidence of God’s blessing (see Genesis 12:2; 15:3-6). The Servant would die, but be victorious over death. He would be resurrected and “see” His spiritual “seed” or spiritual offspring; all those who are saved and have accepted His death on their behalf (see Hebrews 2:13). The prophet then says “he (the LORD) shall prolong his (the Servant’s) days.” This statement looks beyond the Messiah’s death to His resurrection and unending life. Jesus will live eternally. In the last part of this verse, Isaiah said “and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his (the Servant’s) hand.” This refers to the successful completion of God’s plan through the Servant. The Servant’s saving work will be “prosperous,” for it is in accordance to the “pleasure of the Lord,” that is, the will of the LORD. The phrase “in his hand” means by the Servant’s “hand” (see Numbers 36:13 where God is said to have worked by Moses’ hand). This remarkable part of the prophecy could be believed only by those to whom the arm or power of the Lord was revealed (see Isaiah 53:1). This is true today too, for many people still deny the truth of Jesus’ empty tomb. It is one of history’s best-attested facts, but the Holy Spirit has to convince each sinner that Jesus was resurrected and lives today.
2. (vs. 11). This verse says “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.” Many people don’t live to see the fulfillment of their life’s work. But this was not the case with the suffering Servant. Isaiah declared that “He shall see of the travail of his soul” which means that the Servant will see all that has been accomplished by the “travail” or anguish of “His soul.” Even though the Father’s plan included the Son’s suffering (see Hebrews 10:5-14), the Son “shall be satisfied” with what His substitutionary death will accomplish (see Hebrews 12:2). In other words, the Servant will “be satisfied” as He looks back on His suffering and sees the outcome—the salvation of sinners. At this point, the Father takes the role of speaker as the subject turns to justification. The LORD said “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” The Hebrew for “by his knowledge” can also be translated “by the knowledge of Him” which seems to be what is meant here. This would mean that the sinner’s salvation comes through personal knowledge, (which includes faith) of Jesus who God calls “my righteous servant.” One of the most encouraging statements in this passage is that Jesus, God’s “righteous Servant” will “justify many.” A person who knows Jesus Christ by faith is “justified” or declared righteous (right with God) on the basis of Jesus’ death. The Apostle John witnessed a fulfillment of this when he saw in heaven “a great multitude, which no man could number” (see Revelation 7:9). In the last part of this verse, the LORD said that His “righteous Servant” will “justify many” because “he shall bear their iniquities” meaning that He would
take responsibility for our sins. **Note:** The great privilege that comes to us from the death of Christ is justification from sin, our being acquitted of that guilt which alone can ruin us, and accepted into God’s favour, which alone can give us joy. Jesus Christ, who purchased our justification for us, applies it to us by His intercession that He made for us, His gospel preached to us, and His Spirit witnessing in us.

**B. The Servant’s portion (Isaiah 53:12).** Our final verse says “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.” At this point God said “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great.” Although the Servant was rejected by His countrymen, God the Father has rewarded the services and sufferings of Christ with great glory and will give Him the honors of one who is mighty and great (see Philippians 2:9-11). The LORD also said “and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” The “strong” are Jesus’ followers, those who have believed the gospel report and are saved. They will share in “the spoil” or fruits of victory the Servant has obtained through His redemptive work (see Romans 8:16-17). Our lesson ends with a final listing of the reasons why God the Father honors the Servant. First, God honors the Servant “because he hath poured out his soul unto death.” This means that He poured out His life to death. Second, because “he was numbered with the transgressors.” This part of Isaiah’s
prophecy refers to Jesus being crucified between two thieves. When that happened, the Synoptic Gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke agree that it was a fulfillment of this prophecy (see Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37). The third reason given for God honoring the Servant is “and he bare the sin of many.” This means that the Servant was counted as a sinner when He took upon Himself the sins of “many” not all (see Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45), because everyone will not accept Him as Savior by faith. Finally, the fourth reason why The Father honored the Son was because He “made intercession for the transgressors.” While this statement probably applies primarily to the prayer Jesus offered for those who killed Him (see Luke 23:34), it also looked ahead to His present work of “intercession,” which is speaking to or petitioning God on our behalf (see Romans 8:34).

VII. Conclusion. The vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ is the crux of God’s saving plan. Jesus’ death satisfied God’s justice and opened up the only possible way of salvation. The death of Jesus is the only true basis for a relationship with God. We are in error when we allow this truth to become secondary or forgotten. We are not called upon to suffer for our own sins. We are not called upon to suffer for the sins of others. We are called upon to simply believe that Jesus suffered for us. Indeed, salvation cost us nothing; but it was tremendously costly for the LORD. Let us never belittle the saving work of Christ. We who are saved may be called upon to suffer for the sake of Christ (see I Peter 4:12-19), but we
will never suffer eternal punishment for our sins. Jesus did that. Hallelujah!

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