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God has spoken; it will be so—suffering will come to an end and peace will reign. The lingering question that rises above is, why does God allow suffering?

Suffering is all about becoming firmly grounded and perfect. Peter said, “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, **will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you**” (I Peter 5:10).

After Adam and Eve, mankind was born into a world of hardships, selfish ambition, corruption and all self-driven desires. Mankind was doomed to suffer from before the foundation of the world. It was part of the grand plan that mankind would need a Savior and suffering would become part of the perfecting process.

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**” (Revelation 13:8).

Even Christ—the Co-creator, perfect and living in righteousness suffered to become a perfect Savior, a perfect mediator, a perfect companion and a perfect leader for a people born in suffering.

Mankind is a different creation to the heavenly creation. God is moulding mortal man into humble, righteous beings who through suffering forge an intimate relationship with Him. Mankind’s story began with the violation of God’s law and order. Judgment was decreed—their destruction. But, from the foundation of the world, God the Father and His Son, carefully prepared a salvation plan for mankind. Christ would die and pay the price for their sins.

“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected by men,

A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely, He has borne our griefs

And carried our sorrows;

Yet we esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten by God, and afflicted.

But He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray;

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So He opened not His mouth.

He was taken from prison and from judgment,

And who will declare His generation?

For He was cut off from the land of the living;

For the transgressions of My people He was stricken”

(Isaiah 53:2-8).

Christ was willing to suffer beyond any level of human suffering to be the perfect sacrifice unmatched by any, awarding him pre-eminence over mankind. The Psalmist wrote a song of sorrow imaging Christ on the cross.

“Many bulls surround me;

strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

Roaring lions that tear their prey

open their mouths wide against me.

**I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.**
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.
My mouth^a is dried up like a potsherd,
and **my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;**
you lay me in the dust of death.
**Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce^b my hands and my feet.**
All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.
They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment”
(Psalm 22:12-18).

The imagery describes the cruel and mocking rogue heavenly rulers, powers and authorities (Ephesians 6:12) taunting Christ as he hung dying in excruciating pain on the cross.

- The “strong bulls of Bashan” image **powerful rogue heavenly rulers**.
- “Roaring lions” are rogue **royal sons of God**.
- “Dogs” are the wicked in both heaven and earth surrounded him.
- “Villains” are the wicked in heaven and earth who are actively involved in treachery moving to encircle him.
- Christ was poured like water as the Roman soldier plunged a sword into his side.
- His bones were out of joint and visible from the beatings prior to the crucifixion.
- His mouth was dry and they gave him vinegar.
- His hands and feet nailed to a cross.
- They cast lots for his coat because it was seamless made from the top down (Matthew 27:35). This seamless coat images Jesus’ righteousness, from the top—heaven to earth—down. Jesus lived at one with God—without seams.

Wickedness did all they could to intensify Christ’s sufferings on the cross. But, Jesus knew this distress would benefit him in many ways and at multiple levels; so, he endured patiently. The rogue heavenly rulers, powers and authorities ruling over the nations on earth had no idea that Christ’s crucifixion would be their overthrow.

“None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE CRUCIFIED THE LORD OF GLORY” (I Corinthians 2:8).

At Christ's resurrection, he gathered the rogue rulers and imprisoned them in the lower parts of the earth. He paraded them before other imprisoned heavenly rulers.

"He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the **written code**, with **its regulations, that war against us** and that **stood opposed to us**; he took 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 2:13-15).

Christ won the authority over the nations. He took the authority the rogue heavenly rulers had over the nations, which was to teach the nations the ways of God and he gave that authority to his new church who have God's Holy Spirit—a spiritually young group of men and women. To these people, he gave them authority to teach God's way and take the gospel to the world.

"This is why it says: 'When He ascended on high, **He led captives away**, and **GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.**' What does '**He ascended**' mean, except that **He also descended to the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the very one who ascended above all the heavens**, in order to fill all things" (Ephesians 4:8-9).

The "gifts" Christ gave to men was the authority he won from the rogue rulers. He gave "...some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, **to prepare God's people for works of services, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we ALL reach unity in the father** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Christ has led the way; suffering brings perfection. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, **to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings**" (Hebrews 2:9-11).

A closer look at Christ's death on the cross reveals that it was the rogue heavenly rulers over the nations that crucified Christ—"THEY would not have crucified the lord of glory" if they knew God's plan for mankind (1 Corinthians 2:8). By influencing human emotions, they spread their hatred for the Son of God and stirred the religious leaders into a frenzy to sentence Jesus on the cross. Many of the people were infected by their toxic potion and bonded with the strange, powerful dark energy that lashed to and fro touching everyone.

These evil heavenly rulers, powers and authorities (Ephesians 6:12) knew that Jesus was the Son of God who created them through the power of Almighty God, the Father. The heavenly creation did not reproduce themselves, but they were created individually with knowledge, knowing God. Unlike the second creation, mankind. Adam and Eve were created male and female designed to reproduce themselves. They are born without knowledge and they grow into knowledge. Growing into knowledge takes time. Paul said that the immature "babes in Christ" do not know the difference between right and wrong. "Anyone who lives on milk, being

still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:13-14).

Satan knew that mankind needs to grow in the knowledge of God. It takes a highly trained believer filled with the Holy Spirit to be able to discern right from wrong. Eve was just a “babe” easily deceived. Like all of mankind, she thought she had discernment of right and wrong and eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is, listening to Satan—the author of the knowledge of good and evil, she thought she would discern correctly. Satan knew she was easy game. She is the mother of all of mankind and they are all easy game.

God knows the end from the beginning. He worked within His plan of salvation for mankind, their fall and out of their great failure, a people are rising who through suffering forge an unbreakable relationship with God Almighty and a strength of loyalty and determination in righteous living that will never be destroyed. Like their Savior, these people have suffered and today they suffer and into the future the faithful people of God will suffer to stand by Christ and their Father in heaven.

The rogue heavenly rulers, powers and authorities of Ephesians 6:12 simply have not suffered. They are both the originators and instruments of suffering and they cannot anticipate the greatness, the strength and the power that comes from squelching the way of man to allow Christ in you and live as he lives to rise into a new creation. Paul understood this mystery.

“Therefore, **if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).

“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles **the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**” (Colossians 1:27).

The rogue heavenly rulers, powers and authorities thought that mankind was doomed, never to have eternal life, never to fill the positions now open due to one-third of the heavenly creation falling into rebellion, never to fill **all of the positions in God’s headquarters** once occupied by the great “cedars” [great leaders] of Lebanon [God’s heavenly court]. God and His Son planned long ago, a second creation that would complement the first creation in heaven. They planned for mortals with weak bodies needing sleep and continual care—all to suffer and forge through distress and hardship an eternal relationship with God—a relationship that will be truly treasured and protected. That is what the rogue heavenly rulers, powers and authorities did not anticipate or consider possible.

Like Christ, the faithful will suffer and become perfect as Christ was made perfect. Paul said, “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom **I have suffered the loss of all things**, and count them as rubbish, that **I may gain Christ and be found in Him**, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is **through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith**; that **I may**

know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:8-15).

Paul suffered. “Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, **in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often**. From the Jews **five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches**. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, **I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity**” (II Corinthians 11:23-29).

Only in humility and genuine desire to love one another, can the power of Christ shine through us. “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, **for power is perfected in weakness**.’ Most gladly, therefore, **I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me**” (II Corinthians 12:9).

Believers should not think that it is strange that they should suffer in this evil age. Christ suffered and those same enemies will bombard the faithful until Christ rules on this earth. “Beloved, **do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you**, as though some strange thing happened to you; but **rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings**, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. **If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you**. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part, He is glorified” (I Peter 4:12-14).

If you are hated and attacked for holding to the testimony of Jesus, consider the attack as a blessing because the rogue heavenly rulers, powers and authorities strike only those who are close to God.

“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but **also to suffer for His sake**” (Philippians 1:29).

Suffering: tests, purifies, strengthens, and develops character. “And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, **to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not**” (Deuteronomy 8:2).

“Not only that, but **we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope**, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has

been given to us... But God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:3-5, 8).

The saints, God's "preserved" throughout the ages have suffered persecution and martyrdom. On our near horizon rests the final great battle, God and Jesus Christ against Satan, His rogue sons and their coalition. During this time of great distress, the saints will suffer and put their life on the line for their God. They will remain faithful and grow to become the pillars of God's temple; people spiritually strong and ever-enduring.

"They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death**" (Revelation 12:11).

The strength of the saints will baffle the rogue heavenly rulers, powers and authorities. The kingdom they battled to take will not be theirs. God has already announced the victors and heirs of the kingdom that will span across heaven and earth: Jesus Christ and the saints.

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one **like a son of man**, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. **He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion** that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will **never be destroyed**" (Daniel 7:13-14).

This boastful little horn will "wage war against the saints until the Ancient of Days comes and pronounces judgment **in favor of the saints of the Most High**, and the time comes when they possess the kingdom" (Daniel 7:21).

God's people, 21st century Israel, will suffer during "Jacob's trouble"—the Great Tribulation. Into captivity they will go again, for they have pushed their God aside while reveling in self-direction, self-reliance and self-glory. Through a wicked ruler, God will humble His people—all twelve tribes of 21st century Israel.

"Against **a godless nation** I send him, and against **the people of my wrath** I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets (Isaiah 10:6).

God commands this "Assyrian" to plunder, tread down and humble His people, but this wicked ruler plans to completely wipe out every man, woman and child of God's covenant people. "But this is not his intention; this is not his plan. For it is **in his heart to destroy and cut off many nations [the twelve nations of 21st century Israel]**. "Are not **all my commanders kings?**" he says." (Isaiah 10:8).

This rebel brags that his commanders leading this great end-time coalition are kings. Indeed, they are the ten royal kings given a kingdom in Revelation for one hour. This Antichrist has a powerful coalition.

“And the **ten horns** that you saw are **ten kings** who have not yet received **royal power**, but they are to **receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast**” (Revelation 17:12).

These rogue heavenly rulers, powers and authorities believe that through their own power they achieve their victory, but they fail to see that God has planned this long ago, before their time. God has given them the victory and God will thwart their plans. God is in total control.

Foolish ruler, “For he says: ‘**By the strength of my hand I have done this**, and by **my wisdom**, for **I am clever**. I have removed the boundaries of nations and plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their rulers” (Isaiah 10:13).

Satan will partner with the beast from the sea. The power that exudes from out of this alien force will amaze the nations on earth. All the nations on earth will simply surrender, including the nations of 21st century Israel.

The Antichrist will brag, “My hand reached as into a nest to seize the wealth of the nations. Like one gathering abandoned eggs, **I GATHERED ALL THE EARTH. No wing fluttered, no beak opened or chirped**” (Isaiah 10:14).

The nations of the world will say, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?” (Revelation 13:4b)

God responds to this arrogant ruler, “Does an ax raise itself above the one who swings it? Does a saw boast over him who saws with it? It would be like a staff waving the one who lifts it! It would be like a staff lifting him who is not wood! Therefore, the Lord GOD of Hosts will send a wasting disease among Assyria’s stout warriors, and under his pomp will be kindled a fire like a burning flame” (Isaiah 10:15).

God vows that the people of 21st century Israel will rise up and shine—in a single day. The Assyrian—the Antichrist, will not destroy God’s people; God will destroy him and his powerful army. “And **the Light of Israel will become a fire, and its Holy One a flame. In a single day** it will burn and devour Assyria’s thorns and thistles [wicked leaders]. The splendor of its forests [many nations within the alliance] and orchards [trees that bear fruit are like business owners controlling people’s options], both soul and body, it will completely destroy, as a sickness consumes a man” (Isaiah 10:17-18).

These wicked heavenly rulers, powers and authorities thought they could overpower Almighty God. They are unaware of the magnitude of His power. He creates from nothing and when He speaks His creation obeys His commands. Their reasoning has become twisted; they deceive themselves. They plot and plan as if they do not know their Creator, **the source of all power**.

“So, when the Lord has completed all His work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, He will say, “**I will punish the king of Assyria for the fruit of his arrogant heart and the proud look in his eyes**” (Isaiah 10:12).

The nations of the earth have all turned away from the belief in a Creator. But, the upcoming great battle at the end of this age, will be a religious war. God against rogue gods. Mankind will be forced to worship God or the alien gods ruling over them. 21st century Israel will awaken and choose to return to their God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They will open their Bible and begin reading. They will discover their Hebrew roots and start obeying God. This will anger the Antichrist and he will strike them down as God works to humble His people. He will take them into bondage and increase their suffering without limits.

“Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to **make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus**” (Revelation 12:17).

God’s people will purge themselves of their wicked ways and cry out to God enduring patiently the beatings, the scourging, the raw hatred of God and His people of this blasphemous ruler. “On the day **the LORD gives you relief from your suffering and turmoil and from the harsh labor forced on you**, you will sing this **song of contempt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has ceased, and how his fury has ended!**” (Isaiah 14:3-4).

The beast from out of the earth [Babylon] and the beast from out of the sea [Assyria] will both strike the nations of 21st century Israel.

God tells His people hundreds of years ahead of time to stay strong, endure the punishment and suffering that will bring them into a humble strength and eternal perfection. “Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: ‘**O my people**, who dwell in Zion, **be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. For in just a little while My fury against you will subside, and My anger will turn to their destruction**’ (Isaiah 10:24-25).

During this time, many will fall away from the truth. They will seek to preserve their physical life while jeopardizing their spiritual life. “Then they will deliver you over to be persecuted and killed, and **you will be hated by all nations on account of My name**. At that time many will fall away and will betray and hate one another, and many false prophets will arise and mislead many” (Matthew 24:9-11).

Under this extreme distress, many of the people in the nations of 21st century Israel will repent sincerely. They will come out strong and forever faithful and loyal to their God.

God will choose His people **again**, despite their history of rebellion to be a holy nation of royal priests. “For **the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will AGAIN choose Israel [the overcomers]**, and will set them in their own land, and sojourners [people from other nations who suffered with them] will join them and will attach themselves to the house of Jacob” (Isaiah 14:1).

“It will be said on that day, ‘Behold, **this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him**; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isaiah 25:9).

“In that day **the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth**. A remnant will return—a remnant of Jacob—to the Mighty God. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return” (Isaiah 10:20-22a).

The rebellion that began in heaven spread down to cover the earth. God corrects His people first, then He turns to the nations on earth and finds that they are like the people during the days of Noah who were eating and drinking and giving in marriage (Matthew 24:37-39).

Three and a half years earlier, Satan was thrown down to earth and a voice in heaven said, “Woe to the earth and sea” (Revelation 12:12), but the nations are celebrating. They will accept Satan as their ruler and consider their future positive and fruitful.

God is not happy and He is ready to punish them. “**Come near, O nations, to listen; pay attention, O peoples**. Let the earth hear, and all that fills it, the world and all that springs from it. **The LORD is angry with all the nations and furious with all their armies**. He will devote them to destruction; He will give them over to slaughter” (Isaiah 34:1-2).

“A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, **a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness...**” (Zephaniah 1:15).

“For then there will be **great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again**” (Matthew 24:21).

“During those days, **people will seek death but will not find it**; they will long to die, but death will elude them” (Revelation 9:6).

Like the people of 21st century Israel, the people of the nations will not go unpunished for their sins. “‘Therefore, do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says the LORD, ‘nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, **I will save you from afar**, and your seed from the land of their captivity. **Jacob shall return**, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But **I will correct you in justice**, and will **not let you go altogether unpunished**’” (Jeremiah 30:8-11).

“And **the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me**” (Ezekiel 39:23). This scripture is not referring to ancient Israel, but a time in the future when God deals with wicked Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.

From the sin of Adam and Eve, mankind has suffered the torture of lies and deceit, the horror of murder, the bitter disappointment of theft, the wrenching heart ache of adultery, the stinging jealousy of coveting, the heavy oppression of wicked leadership and soon, they will see their enemy once hiding in the shadows and they will be disgusted. Mankind will fall to their knees and witness the gentle kindness of their God and Creator. He will wipe away their tears.

“For the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of living water, and **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**” (Revelation 7:17).

“**He will wipe away every tear from their eyes**, and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Mankind will learn the way of God and become perfect, imaging their Father in heaven. “Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

The reward for repentant mankind is beyond their wildest imagination. An extravagant inheritance has been promised. One that is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (I Peter 1:4-5).

We are only moments away from this great unveiling. What suffering may lie ahead though difficult during the time of affliction, will not compare to the magnitude of God’s generosity that He is offering the second creation born in suffering and transformed into perfection. As God wipes away their tears, repentant mankind will rest in His arms, trust in Him and His word and live His way of love.

Compiled by Janette Andrejowich