

The  
**EXALTATION**  
of the Servant of the Lord  
Isaiah 53:10-12

**CHAPTER FIVE**

Yet Jehovah pleased to crush him; he did make him sick. When his soul shall place a trespass offering, he shall see posterity; he shall prolong days; and the plan of Jehovah shall succeed in his hand. Because of the travail of his soul he shall see; he shall be satisfied by his knowledge.<sup>1</sup> My righteous servant shall procure righteousness for the many, since he himself bears their punishments. Therefore I will allot to him a portion among the mighty; and with the powerful he shall divide gain; because he bared his soul to the death, and with transgressors he was numbered; and he himself lifted up the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

This "Golden Passional" now closes as it began--with the voice of Jehovah God the Father. It began, "Behold my servant shall act wisely; he shall be exalted; he shall be lifted up, and shall be very high." Now it closes with the description of the concluding acts of His wise activity and of the rise to glorious exaltation, which Jehovah had said would result.

**SUMMARY**

Others have spoken in the meantime. A repentant and restored Israel has poured forth a confession of past hostility for the Servant, followed by criticism, then late pity, finally succeeded by repentance and faith in Him as their reconciling substitute. Their words fill verses one to nine. Then the prophet himself speaks briefly in verse 10 and part of 11. Finally Jehovah himself brings it all to a solemn but thrilling climax in the last verse and a half.

Up to this point the benefits of the Calvary work of Christ have all been presented from the standpoint of the redeemed. He has suffered for their transgressions; He had borne their punishments; He has taken their stripes; He has healed their wounds. Now another point of view is taken. We learn what God the Father and Christ the Son have received and will yet receive in benefit from Calvary.

All ages past and all ages future look with one face toward that mysterious event when--riddle of riddles, mystery of mysteries--God the Creator died for man the creature's sin! The Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world" is also the one about whom the redeemed shall lift their paeons of praise forever.

**PROSPECT**

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<sup>1</sup> This division of thought, connecting "by his knowledge" with "he will see" first occurred to me in preparation for a lecture to my Hebrew students in 1945 or 1946. And I presented the translation thus for several years. I observe that Dr. North, as does also H. Wheeler Robinson (*The Cross in the O.T.*, p. 64), favors this translation in his work of 1948, quoted and cited frequently in the appendix to this book (*op.cit.*, p. 126). Though not fully supported by the Massoretic accents, it does find support in the Septuagint and is fully justified by the consonantal text.

Our text now describes the final issue of the "sufferings of Christ" in "the glory which should follow." But, before doing so, it draws our attention to the basic "formal cause" of His sufferings. That cause was the plan of God. Our common version says, "It pleased the LORD to bruise him..." I cannot accept fully the sense of this translation.<sup>2</sup> Commentators have labored hard to find a pleasure for the Father in the crushing of the Son. In my opinion, the cup must have been as bitter for the Father as for the Son. Jehovah was delighted at His Son's willingness to die (as His witness at the baptism proves, Matthew 3:17), but not at the fact of death itself. This "pleasure" of God is the same plan of God that Paul mentions as the "good pleasure of his will...his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself...according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:5,9,11).

Jehovah planned to crush His Son? you ask. Yes, He did. Before He made us, when earth and sky and man and beast were only thoughts in the mind of God, He planned to do so (1 Peter 1:20). Calvary was no accident, no improvisation in the "nick of time." In that first Christian sermon on the first day of Pentecost after the death of Christ, Peter reminded his Jewish audience that "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

Yet, the crushing of His Son was for the ultimate greater glory of that Son--and this we see in the words of our text to follow concerning the exaltation of the Servant of Jehovah to prosperity, to satisfaction, and to compensation for His labor.

## **THE EXALTATION OF THE SERVANT TO PROSPERITY (verse 10)**

**"When his soul shall place a trespass offering, he shall see posterity; he shall prolong days; and the plan of Jehovah shall succeed in his hand."**

### **1. THE CAUSE OF THE SERVANT'S PROSPERITY**

The cause of God's Servant's success or prosperity is said to be the fact that His soul shall place a trespass-offering. The word "when," with which this statement is introduced, is about the equivalent of "because" or "since." This indicates that the making of the trespass-offering is the cause of His prosperity. A learned commentator has suggested that the

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<sup>2</sup> Four facts seem to make it clear that the divine plan and purpose are in view rather than divine enjoyment. First, the position of *Jehovah* is emphatic in the sentence. Usually the verb is first in Hebrew clause, but here the subject, Jehovah Himself, is first. This indicates that Jehovah's activity is to be declared. Second, the meaning of *chaphets* ("it pleased" A.V.) specifies will or purpose quite as often as mere pleasure (e.g., Judges 13:23). Third, the voice of the verb is active, not passive ("pleased," or "purposed"--not "was pleased"). Fourth, and most important, the sentence structure seems to require this sense, for "Jehovah pleased" is followed by an infinitive (Kal construct infinitive of נָדַב ) with a pronominal suffix in accusative relation. This usually expresses purpose of some kind. A parallel case of this grammatical construction indicating purpose with *chaphets* (pleased) is Job 23:32. Besides these grammatical facts, there is evidence from other Scripture. The Bible clearly teaches that God did plan from eternity to bruise the Son (1 Peter 1:20; Acts 2:23). Learned and devout men of the past have labored hard to explain this fact and to relate it to the divine foreknowledge. The results of their cogitations have not been in agreement. It is the opinion of this writer that this is one of the facts of God's truth that we are to accept by faith as true, and to wait for God in heaven to explain.

entire clause should be rendered that His soul shall transform itself into a trespass-offering. This is exactly what happened in the case of our Lord. His soul,<sup>3</sup> that is, the life, which the Scripture says was in the blood, became a trespass-offering. There were five main offerings in the Mosaic dispensation. The trespass-offering is the last treated in the main description of them in Leviticus one to seven. It spoke of one aspect of atonement that none of the others did. That aspect was restitution. The distinctive feature of the ceremony was that it was accompanied by restitution for wrongs committed against the holy procedures of the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 5:16, 6:4). It was presented "to make amends for the harm that he has done" (Leviticus 5:16).

At any rate, before it could become a trespass-offering, the animal had to be slain. So it was that Jesus became our trespass-offering, not only dying to bear all our punishments, but also at the same time paying to God every debt we owed Him. He is not only our propitiation, but also our satisfaction before God.

## 2. THE ELEMENTS IN THE SERVANT'S PROSPERTIY

There are three elements in the Servant's Prosperity.

### A. Numerous Offspring

The first is described in the words "he shall see posterity." To a Hebrew, one of the most obvious evidences of the Lord's blessing and of real prosperity was a large family of children. Contrariwise, it was regarded as stark tragedy for one to die childless. This chapter was written first for Hebrew readers, and here was one real evidence of their Messiah's future success--He was to have numerous offspring. A close look at the context will show that the very scene of childbirth is in the background--but let us wait for the next verse before pursuing this thought. Just this much now: it was "when his soul" makes itself a trespass-offering--when He was dying--that He caught a vision of His offspring. I do not insist upon it, but it seems to me that this must be in the background of such a

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3 The word "soul" (*nephesh* in Hebrew) deserves special treatment. It has 46 different translations in the Authorized Version. Usually translated "soul," it frequently serves much like psyche, "soul" in the New Testament. It is predicated of both men and beasts. Thus it refers to the animating principle of the body (Genesis 2:7) and includes all its emotions and appetites (Proverbs 23:2, Ecclesiastes 6:7, Numbers 21:15). To this life principle the blood is mystically connected. Girdlestone (*Synonyms of the Old Testament*) says: "In Hebrew, as in most languages, the shedding of a man's blood was a phrase used to represent the taking of his life, for 'the blood is the life.' In this oft-repeated phrase (e.g., Leviticus 12:11,14) we see that the blood is (i.e., represents) 'the soul,' and if the one flows out from the body, the other passes away too. In Proverbs 28:17 we read literally, 'The man who does violence--to the blood of a soul shall flee into the pit;' so in Ezekiel 33:6, Jonah 1:14s... This mystical identification of the blood and the life is of great interest as bearing on the work of Christ. We are told that He poured out His soul unto death and that He shed His blood for the remission of sins. Evidently the shedding of the blood was the outward visible sign of the severance of the soul from the body in death, and this severance is regarded as a voluntary sacrifice offered by the Divine Son, in accordance with His Father's will, as the means of putting away sin." There are other Hebrew words similar in meaning to *nephesh*, (soul). The commonest are *ruach*, usually "spirit," and *chayyah*, usually "life." The first, "spirit," answers to the Greek pneuma. It refers usually to the higher nature of man, which corresponds to the nature of God. God is *ruach* (spirit) in the Old Testament, but not *nephesh* (soul). The word *chayyah* (life) is close to *nephesh* (soul) in meaning. There is no general rule for consistent translation. Hebrew psychology and anthropology operated in different categories from ours. Old Testament scholarship cannot agree at the present time on important aspects of the problem, though warm scholarly warfare continues.

passage as Psalm 22:30, which after predicting the sufferings of Christ says, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." Another is Psalm 45:16, which says of the coming Lord and King, that "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou shall make princes in all the earth."

## B. Long Life

The second element in His prosperity is to be great length of life. The words are "he shall prolong days." Great length of life, as among all peoples, was among the Hebrews of Isaiah's time regarded as evidence of God's favor. Long life was promised for obedience to parents in "the first commandment with promise" (Exodus 20:12), as a reward for honest dealings (Deuteronomy 25:15), and to the son who kept the commandments of the Lord (Proverbs 3:2). In Jesus' case it was almost an insoluble mystery for the three days between His death and resurrection that God would give Him "length of days." But the resurrection morning solved the mystery. This explains the Apostolic claim that His resurrection was "according to the Scriptures."

## C. Successful Accomplishment

The third aspect of the Lord's prosperity is indicated in the common version by the words "and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." As we showed earlier in this chapter, the words "please" and "pleasure" here refer to the plan of God. When Jesus came, God committed the accomplishment of a plan into His hand. That plan, as set forth in the first chapter of Ephesians and in other passages, was to accomplish the redemption of a fallen world by His death in the sinner's place. "Jehovah pleased (planned) to crush Him." Our verse says that His plan "prospered," or as the Hebrew literally means, it "came to completion" in His hand. From the moment He declared that He "must be about my Father's business," on past the time when He formally dedicated Himself to the death at His baptism, and when He firmly set His face to accomplish His decease at Jerusalem, He never wavered. The devil tried to kill Him as a babe and keep the Father's plan from coming to completion; at least three times He was tempted by Satan to throw it over; His mother at the Cana wedding feast tried to get Him to abortively manifest Himself, thus to avoid the conclusion of His task; Peter tried to talk Him out of it, yet He fought the thing through in the garden of Gethsemane, and finally, after five or six hours of cruel pain on the cross, He cried "It is finished." *Tetelestai!* It is finished! The payment of the price of our redemption was finished. His course was finished. The Old Testament Law was finished. The typology was finished. One of the gospel writers might have truthfully added that then another Old Testament prophecy was finished too--that "the plan of Jehovah shall come to completion in his hand."

The next verse tells of

## **THE EXALTATION OF THE SERVANT TO SATISFACTION (verse 11)**

**"Because of the travail of his soul he will see;<sup>4</sup> he shall be satisfied by his knowledge. My righteous servant shall procure righteousness for the many since he himself bears their punishments."**

Commentators have wrestled for centuries with the problem of how the Lord justifies men "by his knowledge," as indicated in most versions. My translation, which is fully justified by the Hebrew, joins the words "by his knowledge" with his satisfaction rather than with His procurement of righteousness (justification) for the many. I think it is the correct translation.

## 1. THE FIGURE OF CHILDBIRTH--THE CAUSE OF SATISFACTION

The figure in the verse, half veiled by the stately language, is the scene of childbirth. Such is the meaning of the "travail."

Several times now I have been present at the scene of childbirth. From what I have observed, as well as by the testimony of a family physician, I know that at the time a mother travails and is delivered of her offspring, she is much refreshed in spirit when the sight of her babe meets her eyes. There is a light kindled in her eyes and a joy of accomplishment.

Our Lord went through travail, the travail of bringing into existence a spiritual "seed" at Calvary. His pangs were such as no mother ever knew. His were of "his soul." It had its seat within the personality rather than merely in the body. It had its voice in the words of Gethsemane, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," and in those other words from the cross, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?"

In that awful hour He had a vision--"Because of the travail of his soul he shall see." The word is that used of the prophetic visions of the Old Testament prophets, as well as of natural sight. This one was prophetic--prophetic of the "many sons" He would yet bring into glory.

Best of all, says our prophet, when He was to have the vision, "he shall be satisfied by his knowledge." What did He know? He knew that the ones for whom He had just prayed (John chapter 17)--the disciples and all those who should believe on Him through their spoken and written testimony down through the present age--would come trooping into glory. He saw the redeemed of all ages, saved by His grace, bought by His blood, sanctified by His Spirit, glorified in His presence, safe in heaven's portal--past the pearly gates. The knowledge gained by such a vision was surely satisfying to Him.

## 2. THE ELEMENT IN SATISFACTION

I have been anticipating a bit, for in the last half of the verse the elements involved in His satisfaction are delineated before us. A learned student of this passage (Geo. Adam Smith) has translated it as follows: "My servant, righteous himself, wins righteousness for many, and makes their iniquities his load."

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<sup>4</sup> See note on first page of this chapter.

His satisfaction, then, was that He undertook successfully to provide righteousness for His many spiritual seed, and that by assuming their sin's penalty He was able to see at the moment of victory the teeming fruit of His travail.

Note that to do this He had to be "righteous himself." To take the sinner's place there could be no sin of His own commission.

He had to "win righteousness for the many." This He could do, for once our sins were imputed to Him, His righteousness could be imputed to us (2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Romans 3:24-30).

Oh, there is a real peace and joy in knowing a Saviour like this--one whose satisfaction consists in making the burdens of sinners His load. Paul said his glory was the cross. Long before Paul's day, Jeremiah wrote:

*"Thus says the LORD: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight, says the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:23,24).*

In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time;  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,  
Hopes deceive and fear annoy,  
Never shall the cross forsake me;  
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming  
Light and love upon my way,  
From the cross the radiance streaming  
Adds more luster to the day.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,  
By the cross are sanctified;  
Peace is there that knows no measure,  
Joys that through all time abide.

Finally, this great oracle closes with

#### **THE EXALTATION OF THE SERVANT TO COMPENSATION (verse 12)**

**"Therefore I will allot to him a portion among the mighty; and with the powerful he shall divide gain; because he bared his soul to the death, and with transgressors he was numbered; and he himself lifted up the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."**

As in the two verses preceding, the Lord presents both the causes for the Servant's exaltation and the elements involved in it. This time, however, the order is reversed and the causes are saved till last. It is as if God would not close on the theme of the Servant's exaltation without one more reference to the atonement, even more precious than the exaltation.

## 1. THE ELEMENTS IN COMPENSATION

### A. A lot among the Mighty

The compensation our Lord receives for His service is described, first, as receiving a lot among the great. "Therefore, I will allot to him a portion among the mighty." The very word for "allot" signifies the division of the fruits of victorious battle. When the Israelites had conquered a large section of Canaan, Joshua superintended an allotment of it among the twelve tribes--and this is the very word used for the division. David used the same word in referring to division of spoil among his men after victory over the Amalekites.

And who are the mighty ones with whom He will share the fruits of victory? They are the same as those referred to in verse eleven as "the many" who are justified. "Mighty ones" and "many" are the same Hebrew word and probably refer to the same group. So together the Lord and His saints shall "possess the kingdom."

What is the inheritance allotted? I think it is that group of "kings" and "many nations" introduced in 52:13 as utterly confounded over the final glory of Christ at His coming and kingdom. David prophesied of this saying, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8). Psalm 72:8-11 tells how "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him."

### B. Gain among the powerful

About the same thought is presented in the second statement, "And with the powerful he shall divide gain." Who are these "powerful" ones? There can be small doubt that they are the armies of the redeemed, of whom Psalm 110:3 says, "Thy people are thorough devotion in the day of thy power." These are the armies who follow Him on white horses (Revelation 19:14) and who go forth to destroy Antichrist and his false prophet, whose bodies are committed to the "burning flame." They are confessing Him now; He will confess them then.

## 2. THE CAUSES OF THE SERVANT'S COMPENSATION

Yet all this, remember, is *His* victory. He is the one who is able to open the seals to the "title deed to the universe," and breaking those seals hears the redeemed sing "a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the

book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9,10).

One ought really to speak for an hour or to write a whole book to treat these last four statements of the prophecy.

Why is He worthy of such compensation? Because "He bared his soul to the death."<sup>5</sup> Not like some slavish gladiator did He go to the arena, driven by whip, or like Bryant's quarry slave "scourged to his dungeon," but voluntarily He went. He bared His own life to the cruel cross in self-dedication. "I lay down my life," said He. "No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17,18). And it was to "the death." It was "even the death of the cross." It was *the* death of all time. "Time's tragedy" was in the Saviour's heart that day, not in the "aching stoop" of Markham's "Man with the Hoe."

"And with transgressors he was numbered." The mythology of a corrupt Christendom has numbered Jesus among the saints. False religion has numbered Him among the prophets. But God and the Jews numbered Him with transgressors--common thieves--on that fearful day. Even He Himself numbered Himself among them, for on the last night He told Peter, "For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in me: *And he was numbered with the transgressors.*" (Luke 22:37). What bitter but blessed fulfillment that saying had! The "end" of which He spoke arrived when they crucified Him between two thieves.

"And he himself lifted up the sin of many." The scapegoat, over which Aaron confessed the sins of the people and which carried those sins away to the wilderness, comes before us now. What that animal did in symbol Jesus did in actuality. He lifted up our sins and carried them all away. How joyously Peter echoes this statement: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24)!

The prophecy closes with the statement, "And (He) made intercession for the transgressors." "Intercession" here means essentially to strike or to assail something. Thus one receives the impression of the Son of God assailing the throne of His Father on behalf of transgressors. The Hebrew also indicates that this intercession is a work that has now been begun, but unlike the finished work prophesied in the three statements with which it is parallel, it is still going on. This intercessory ministry began long before the end of our Lord's earthly life and is seen in pathetic but majestic operation in Gethsemane and in the so-called high-priestly prayer

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5 A startling recent interpretation of Philippians 2:8 [*sic*; 2:7?], the famous "kenosis" passage, is that Paul had in mind these words, "he has poured out his soul unto death" and was referring to the death of Christ rather than to his incarnation. (See *The Cross in the Old Testament*, H. Wheeler Robinson, pp. 104,105.) Arguments in support are quite convincing. This interpretation of Philippians 2:7, (*heauton ekenosen*) was set forth in *Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testamentum* (ed. G. Kittel, Stuttgart 1952) in the article "*Pais Theou*". It has since been translated into English as *The Servant of God* by W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, No. 20 in *Studies in Biblical Theology* (Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 625 East Ogden Avenue, Naperville, Ill.)



of John seventeen. The most striking fulfillment of the prophecy is in the prayer "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," made while still hanging on the cross (Luke 23:34). When one considers that every saint is a saved transgressor, this prayer takes on a still wider perspective. The ministry of intercession continues in the glory where, according to Hebrews 7:25, "he ever lives to make intercession" for them "who come unto God by him." And the mind turns from that to another precious reminder of this fact: "It is Christ who died, yea rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

## CONCLUSION

Only God Himself could have devised a message like this oracle set in the 52nd and 53rd chapters of Isaiah. Only God could have made known the facts herein revealed.

We have heard this marvelous prophecy. God's Servant is first presented as the submissive Servant destined to both suffering and glory--destined to be gaped at by many people at His first coming on account of the baseness of His humiliation, destined to be gaped at again on account of the marvel of His glory at the second coming. Then we have heard a repentant Israel confess that the one whose message and person they once rejected and crucified for sins which they thought His own was really their promised Messiah, slain for their own sins. Just now we have heard the prophet and Jehovah speak of His destined glory. How accurate, how precise, how detailed the prophecy is both in prediction and fulfillment.

As I bring these expositions to a close, I can find no words better fitted to express my feelings than those with which Albert Barnes closed his remarks on this passage over 100 years ago. A century of time has not detracted one whit from the pungent pertinency of his words.

"This whole chapter is exceedingly important to Christians. It contains the most full, continuous statement in the Bible of the design of the Redeemer's sufferings and death. And after all the light which is shed on the subject in the New Testament, after all the full and clear statements made by the Redeemer and the Apostles, still, if we wish to see a full and continuous statement on the great doctrine of the atonement, we naturally recur to this portion of Isaiah. If we wish our faith to be strengthened and our hearts warmed by the completion of his sufferings, we shall find no part of the Bible better adapted to it than this. It should not only be the subject of congratulation, but of much fervent prayer. No man can study it too profoundly. No one can feel too much anxiety to understand it. Every verse, every phrase, every word should be pondered until it fixes itself deep in the memory and makes an eternal impression on the heart. If a man understands this portion of the Bible, he will have a correct view of the plan of salvation. And it should be the subject of profound and prayerful contemplation till the heart glows with love to that merciful God who was willing to pour out his soul unto death. I bless God that I have been permitted to study it; and I pray that this exposition--cold and

imperfect as it is--may be the means yet of extending correct views of the design of the Redeemer's death among his friends, and of convincing those who have doubted the truth of the Bible, that a prophecy like this demonstrates that the Book in which it occurs must be from God."