

Isaiah 50

This is an interesting chapter in that it gives input concerning three very important topics. It first addresses Jehovah's separation from the southern kingdom of Judah due to her disobedience. It next describes the manner in which the Father trained the Servant (Jesus), and follows with a description of the Servant's sufferings.

A sequence of events that we need to consider is addressed in this section of Isaiah. Isaiah 49 addressed the commission or calling of the *Servant*; Isaiah 50 addresses the suffering and anguish of the *Servant*; Isaiah 52 and 53 will describe the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of the *Servant*. If possible, keep this in mind as we continue.

Is. 50:1 Thus says the Lord, "Where is the certificate of divorce, By which I have sent your mother away? Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you? Behold, you were sold for your iniquities, And for your transgressions your mother was sent away.

Note that Jehovah is speaking in verses 1-3. Jehovah, through Moses, made two things very clear in the book of Deuteronomy. First off, a *husband* was required to issue a *certificate of divorce* if a *divorce* was to be finalized (read Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Secondly, the consequence of disobedience was the withdrawal of material blessings (read Deuteronomy 11:16-17; 28:15-68).

According to Exodus 24, God had married *Israel* at the base of *Mount Sinai*. Because God was no longer blessing Judah due to her sin, many in Isaiah's day viewed God as having already divorced the southern kingdom. However, in Isaiah's day, no *certificate of divorce* had been issued in accordance with the conditions described in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Yes, the *divorce* would occur approximately 100 years later (in Jeremiah's day), but no such *divorce* was in effect in Isaiah's day. A separation had occurred; and the withholding of blessings confirmed it; but the *divorce* would not be issued until the Babylonians overthrew the southern kingdom in 586 BC.

Notice the phrase, "*Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you?*" If a man had accumulated excessive debt, he could sell his *children* into slavery and gain the necessary funds to repay his creditors (Exodus 21:7; 2Kings 4:1; Nehemiah 5:5). Had the Father allowed Judah to be taken into slavery in Isaiah's day, it would not have been due to indebtedness on His part. Jehovah has no creditors; for He is God—He owns all things and, therefore, owes no man anything. Consider this as well: Judah would have already been exiled had a divorce occurred, but Judah was still in the land. Therefore, *the certificate of divorce*, which was issued when Judah was exiled to Babylon, was an event that would occur years after Isaiah's day. Also, the phrase, "*Behold, you were sold for your iniquities,*" (Isaiah 50:1), is rendered, "*For your iniquities you have sold yourselves,*" in the New King James Version. Tying Ezekiel 16:41 in with Isaiah 50:1-3, we find that Judah had been selling herself to her *lovers* for some time, both before and during her separation from the Father. When the *divorce* finally occurred, in conjunction with the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, along with the subsequent exile to Babylon, she could no longer sell herself as such. This proves that only a separation had occurred in Isaiah's day, for the southern kingdom was continuing to sell herself to her lovers at that time.

Jehovah had divorced the northern kingdom (Israel) during Isaiah's ministry, an event which occurred in 722 BC when Assyria took the northern kingdom into captivity (read Jeremiah 3:6-8 and 2Kings 17:6). Therefore the exile of the northern kingdom in 722 BC confirmed that a divorce had occurred between the Father and Israel. His separation from Judah in Isaiah's day, confirmed by His withdrawal of blessing, lasted approximately 100 years. It ended in Jeremiah's day with a divorce, for Babylon destroyed *Jerusalem* (along with the temple) in 586 BC and took

Judah into captivity (2Kings 25:8-12). This divorce resulted from Judah's persistent sin (Jeremiah 3:8-10; Ezekiel 16:35-52, 58-59). Therefore, the Father was separated from Judah in Isaiah 50 and not yet divorced. The divorce came later, in 586 BC, when Judah was exiled to Babylon.

The *new covenant* of Jeremiah 31:31-34 is the new marriage contract that both Judah and Israel will enter into with the Father at the end of the Tribulation (confirming that both Judah and Israel had previously been divorced from the Father). Based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4, if a *husband* divorced his *wife*, they could be reunited only if neither had remarried during their period of divorcement. Otherwise, their remarriage to one another is prohibited. Israel, Judah, nor the Father will remarry during the time of their divorcement (Hosea 2:5-7 states why the northern kingdom of Israel will not remarry). Therefore, it will be permissible for them to be reunited at the end of the Tribulation in preparation for the blessings of the Millennium. The Jewish nation will then control and inhabit, for the first time in its existence, all the *land* originally promised in Genesis 15:18. Can you believe the depth of the richness of God's word? It truly is amazing!

Is. 50:2 "Why was there no man when I came? When I called, why was there none to answer? Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink for lack of water, And die of thirst.

When Jehovah asked that the nation repent of her sin, no one answered. This was not due to a lack of *power* on God's part, for His omnipotence was manifested mightily when He delivered the Jews from Egypt long before Isaiah's day. What we must realize is that God cannot give man a free will and force him to obey. This would violate His character and destroy His credibility. Therefore, the fact that no one repented when He *called* the nation to repent does nothing to discredit His *power*.

Is. 50:3 "I clothe the heavens with blackness, And I make sackcloth their covering."

The Creator has authority over His creation (also read the notes associated with Isaiah 40:12). Even so, as we saw in verse 2, God cannot force man to obey if He created man a free moral agent. Therefore, the lack of response to Jehovah's call to repentance was due to Judah's rebellion and, certainly, revealed no sign of weakness on the part of the Creator.

Is. 50:4 ¶ The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

Note that it is the Servant, the second Person of the Trinity, who is speaking in verses 4-9. The Servant is described as the Father's disciple; for even though He has forever been deity, there were things for Him to learn within the realm of His humanity. What He gleaned from the Father during times of instruction allowed Him *to sustain the weary one with a word*. Verses such as Matthew 11:28-30 verify that Jesus continually presented hope to the downcast and disheartened. It is interesting that the Father would awaken the Servant *morning by morning*. The disciple, like the Servant, will find that sitting alone with the Father in the early morning hours is truly invigorating. The anticipation of this event can cause one to rise early before there is even the slightest possibility of distraction. Notice also that the Father would awaken the Servant's *ear to listen as a disciple*. No wonder Jesus understood a wealth of truth (Mark 6:12) and spoke with such remarkable *authority* (Matthew 7:28-29; John 6:63). Because the Father granted the Servant a special ability *to listen*, His ability to retain what He was being taught was amazingly efficient. One thing is certain: The disciple's *ear* must be energized by the Father if wisdom and

discernment are to follow. This principle is validated throughout Scripture; for even though the Pharisees diligently studied *the Scriptures* (John 5:39), they understood little of what they read (Matthew 13:14-15). Why? Sin blinds *the minds* of the unredeemed (2Corinthians 4:4), preventing them from understanding the truth. No wonder Paul prayed the prayer of Ephesians 1:17-19a for the believers at Ephesus.

This verse adds much insight into the need for discipleship. Jesus *appointed twelve men that they might be with Him* (Mark 3:14). What do you think the *twelve* heard from the lips of their Mentor? They heard what their Mentor had been taught in the wee hours of the morning by the Father. In fact, every word that Jesus spoke found its origin in *the Father* alone (John 12:49-50).

One of the greatest experiences of my life has been the opportunity to be mentored by a man who loves Jesus. His name is Larry Heppes, and he lives in San Antonio, Texas. The vision for my life has come as a result of the many hours we have spent together, for I have basically done with others (in Christ's strength, of course) what he originally did with me. I cannot thank him enough for putting up with me when I was so very young and immature in the faith. I will forever be indebted to him for his patience and longsuffering.

Is. 50:5 The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient, Nor did I turn back.

Again we see that it was the Father who *opened* the Servant's *ear* to hear and understand the Father's instruction, instruction that proved very helpful during times of severe mistreatment. From the four Gospels, it is obvious that no disobedience was found in Christ; for He lived a sinless life so He might die for sinful man. Neither *did* He *turn back* from His calling, even though there were seasons when it looked as though His mission was totally fruitless (read the notes associated with Isaiah 49:4). It is imperative that we recognize that it was the Father's instruction (and life) that sustained Jesus during His darkest hours. We can't read Matthew 4:1-11 and draw any other conclusion; for it was truth alone, truth that Jesus had learned from the Father, that consistently served as the weapon through which the enemy was cast aside.

Is. 50:6 I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.

Isaiah 50:6 deals with the Servant's suffering before His death described in Isaiah 53. Note that the Servant voluntarily *gave His back to those who* struck Him. He also willingly allowed His captors to *pluck out His beard*, even though it was a sign of disapproval and contempt (read Ezra 9:3; Nehemiah 13:25). Neither *did* He *cover His face* when *spat* upon (also read Matthew 26:67). He resisted none of the ill-treatment directed His way, much *Like a lamb that is led to slaughter* (Isaiah 53:7).

Is. 50:7 For the Lord God helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I shall not be ashamed.

The Servant was neither *disgraced* nor *ashamed* due to the constant support of the Father. In fact, through His death, burial, and resurrection, He would not only be vindicated, but see His enemies humiliated in defeat. Because He understood what His obedience would mean for mankind, He *set His face like flint*, allowing nothing to dissuade, deter, nor discourage Him in His mission as Redeemer.

I have discovered that most great men in the Scriptures have one thing in common. They know for what they were made, understand their purpose, and allow nothing to dishearten them as they

pursue God's intention for their lives. Are we to do the same as we yield to the Christ who dwells within us? Absolutely!

Is. 50:8 He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me.

The Servant, understanding that the Father would bring vindication on His behalf, realized that no one could *contend with* Him nor effectively accuse Him in a court of law? Based on Romans 1:3-4, *the resurrection* was the vindication needed to shut the mouths of all His accusers. That is why Paul writes that our *faith is worthless...if Christ has not been raised* (1Corinthians 15:16-17).

Is. 50:9 Behold, the Lord God helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them.

All who dispute what the Servant taught and accomplished will perish *like a...moth-eaten garment*.

Is. 50:10 Who is among you that fears the Lord, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God

Isaiah, who is speaking in verses 10-11, states that all who fear *the Lord* and obey *the voice of His servant* (the “*servant*” here is the Messiah) are to *trust in God’s name*—even when the *darkness* is so prevalent that *no light* can be found. If the *servant* could do so during His earthly ministry through living by the Father’s life (John 14:10), the believer today can do the same through living by the *Servant’s life* (Colossians 3:4; Romans 5:10).

Is. 50:11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle yourselves with firebrands, Walk in the light of your fire And among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand; And you will lie down in torment.

Those who reject the *Servant* will reap the consequence of their disobedience in that the *fire* they *kindle* will eventually bring *torment*. It will cause them to *lie down in torment*, an expression that points to their imprisonment in hell initially, followed by their confinement in *the lake of fire* eternally (Revelation 20:11-15).