

2. TEACH, CHAPTER 50

a. OBJECTIONS CANCELLED

TEXT: 50:1-3

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah, Where is the bill of your mother's divorce-ment, wherewith I have put her away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold for your iniquities were ye sold, and for your transgressions was your mother put away.
- 2 Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink, because there is no water, and die for thirst.
- 3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

QUERIES

- a. Why bring up the subject of divorce?
- b. What is meant by the question, ". . . was there no man"?
- c. What do "stinking fish" have to do with the subject?

PARAPHRASE

This is what Jehovah says to your objections: I am the husband, you are my wife. You know My law says when a husband divorces his wife he must give her a written certificate of divorce. You say I have divorced you, Israel, and I am putting you away—where is the certificate? No, I have not divorced you, you have left me. Look at it another way: Do you think you have gone into slavery because I sold you to pay somebody a debt I owed them? I owe no one! You are going into slavery because you wanted to be as much like the Babylonians as possible.

It is your rebellion against Me and your infatuation with and dependence upon ungodly men that will bring about your enslavement to them. Why did everyone try to hide and keep away from Me when I came to save you? Why did no one answer Me when I called through My prophets? Have I ever given anyone reason to think that I could not save you from every enemy? No, you and all your ancestors have seen with your own eyes that I have saved you from greater powers than men. I have dried up seas and rivers and some of you have seen the heaps of rotting, stinking fish when this has happened. I have also worked great miracles in the heavens which some of your ancestors saw and have written in your scriptures. No, you are not going to be enslaved because I am powerless to help you or because I wanted it that way, says Jehovah.

COMMENTS

v. 1 ACCUSATIONS: Judah is trying to justify herself against Jehovah's accusations (through His prophets) and against His promise of her impending captivity, with some accusations of her own! Judah is trying to blame Jehovah for her troubles with Babylon. She is accusing Jehovah of casting her off "illegally," or without justification. That is the impenitent sinner's usual ruse. Jehovah answers by referring them to His Law. The Law of Jehovah is, of course, His will—a revelation in human terms of His very nature. It is not Jehovah's nature to do anything without justification. In the matter of divorce, for example, if there is legal cause for a man to put away his wife, he must certify the legality of it by a written bill of divorcement (Dt. 24:1f). There is no written "bill of divorcement" from Jehovah. Israel is separated from Jehovah by her own doing—not His! She has gone after other lovers (cf. Hosea 1-3). The Lord did not want the separation, nor is He responsible for it. Another objection Israel might propose is that the Lord will give her up to slavery because Babylon has some claim upon Him. The thought is preposterous. Jehovah

owes no one! Jehovah is not man that He has creditors. No one has any claims upon Him! Israel will go away into slavery because of her own weaknesses, not God's. Judah had flirted with the Babylonians off and on for a number of years (cf. comments on Isaiah, ch. 36-39). The separation was her doing, not the Lord's. Jehovah's attitude toward Israel is graphically portrayed in the experience of Hosea with his wife.

v. 2-3 ACTUALITIES: Israel has accused Jehovah of insensitively casting her off. The actual facts are quite different. Many times Jehovah came to Israel (through prophets and providential judgments and redemptions) to rescue her from her headlong plunge into pagan slavery, but she would not listen. This is the historical record! Furthermore, the actual facts are that God demonstrated that He not only wanted to save Israel from enslavement but He had the power to save her. Time and time again He came, but none responded. In fact, He was rejected (cf. Isa. 30:8-11), until in the fulness of time He came incarnate to His own and they crucified Him! Delitzsch interprets these as the words of The Servant. Certainly 50:4f would seem to be The Servant's, and these may very well be His also. The apparent reference to the Red Sea exodus (" . . . at my rebuke I dry up the sea . . .") would indicate these to be the words of Jehovah. Since Jehovah and the Servant are essentially One (Jn. 1:1-18; 14:8-11; Col. 1:19; 2:9), Isaiah constantly shifts from One to the other in these latter chapters. This is not unusual. It is the "shortened perspective" aspect of O.T. prophecy. It may be nearer the correct interpretation to understand Jehovah as the speaker in 50:1-3 and the Servant in 50:4-11. Whatever the case, the point of this passage is to emphasize the righteousness and justness of God in Israel's imminent enslavement and to implore Israel again that He is not only willing but able to save her if she will hearken to His leading. The final and full revelation of Jehovah's redemptive purpose will be in the Person of The Servant, and that is who addresses Israel next.

QUIZ

1. What kind of accusation is Jehovah countering by the reference to a bill of divorcement?
2. What accusation would be answered by speaking of "creditors"?
3. Why did Israel go away into captivity?
4. Who is speaking in verses one-three?
5. How has Jehovah demonstrated His power to save?

b. OBEDIENT CHRIST

TEXT: 50:4-9

- 4 The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught.
- 5 The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward.
- 6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.
- 7 For the Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.
- 8 He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand up together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.
- 9 Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? behold, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

QUERIES

- a. What is the “tongue of them that are taught”?
- b. What is significant about “plucking” hair from the cheek?
- c. How did he “set his face like a flint”?

PARAPHRASE

The Servant of Israel who comes to redeem Zion speaks. The Lord Jehovah gives Me words of divine wisdom so that I may sustain the weary and despairing. I am in constant communion with the will of Jehovah just like an obedient disciple to His Master. The Lord Jehovah speaks His commandments to Me and I keep them—I do not rebel and turn away from them. I willingly conform to Jehovah’s plan and will offer my back to those who will smite me. I will suffer the humiliation of having the hairs of my beard plucked out by my tormentors. I will not be resentful or rebel when my enemies try to shame me by spitting in my face. I will trust completely in the Lord Jehovah for He will come to My aid. My intention to do His will cannot be thwarted by such actions and I will not be distracted from His will by them. I have set my will as hard as diamond to do His will and I know that ultimately I will be glorified in doing so. He is always present and He will vindicate My trust in Him. He will show to the world once and for all that I am sinless and righteous. If there is someone in all creation who can prove any unrighteousness against Me, let him stand up and present his case! There is no one! The enemies of the Servant may falsely accuse Him, but they will all be put to shame as easily as a moth devours old, worn-out clothes.

COMMENTS

v. 4-7 DISCIPLINED: The Hebrew word *limmudiym* (them that are taught; could be translated *disciples* for it is the same word

as is used in Isaiah 8:16. It is the root word from which the later Hebrew word *Talmud* (instruction) was derived. Jehovah will equip the Servant with divine wisdom and instruction. The obedient character of the Servant is being emphasized. He will hear the commandment of Jehovah and do it (cf. Mt. 3:17; 17:5; Jn. 8:29; 14:31; 15:10; Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 5:8; 10:9), as compared with Israel who had the commandment of God taught to them by the prophets and did *not* hear and obey. The Servant, experiencing obedience, will become the "pathfinder" (Gr. *archegon*, in Heb. 2:10) of our salvation. He will be able to "succor" those who must also experience obedience (Heb. 2:18). Why did the Servant (Jesus) need to "learn obedience through the things He suffered" (Heb. 5:8-9)? Was He disobedient? Was He less than perfect? Were there things He did not know and could only know by chastening and instruction? Perhaps we shall never know fully the profound, divine mystery of the *kenosis* (humiliation) of the Son of God. Perhaps, in His willing choice to suffer the humiliation of incarnation (becoming flesh), He must, in some way *experience* discipline in order to fulfill the whole experience of incarnation. He was subject to His earthly parents as well as to His Heavenly Father. He did grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man (cf. Lk. 2:40, 51, 52). Perhaps He did not need to experience obedience for His own sake but for ours. If we are to really believe He knows and cares about our chastenings—if we are to have realistic (not superficial) commitment and discipleship to Him—then the Servant must experience suffering and obedience. He must obey the Father's commandments at the cost of self—not for Himself but for us. So the Servant, God-incarnate, is given the tongue of them that are taught, that He may know how to sustain with words him that is weary.

The phrase "he wakeneth morning by morning" emphasizes the continuous, unreserved obedience of the Servant. He always obeys. He never takes a day off from obeying the Father. It was His *mission to obey* the Father! (Jn. 12:27; Heb. 10:5f). It was His mission to teach mankind what obedience to the Father

involved and produced. There was not the slightest rebellion in the Servant. He was tempted; He was tested—supremely—but He did not yield. Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah, and a host of other servants objected and some even tried to resist the Lord's call (cf. Ex. 4:10ff; Jer. 20:7ff; 17:16; Jonah 1:3). The Servant did not turn back from serving Jehovah for one moment (cf. Mt. 4:1-11; Jn. 4:34; 9:4; Heb. 10:5-10, etc.).

The Servant's experience of obedience involved "giving His back to the smiters." He was to be delivered up for such humiliation and suffering according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (cf. Acts 2:23). Yet it was not without His willing surrender to God's plan for He had the power to lay down His life and the power to take it up. No one took His life from Him (cf. Jn. 10:17-18). Whatever He did or whatever was done to Him, He allowed it to be (cf. Jn. 19:10-11) in obedience to the plan of His Father. He allowed His tormentors to "pluck off the hair" which refers no doubt to His beard. Many passages in the Bible seem to show that the Jews let their beards grow. Psalm 132 directly states that Aaron, Moses' brother, had a beard; and balm flowed down it to the very skirts of his robe. The Oriental regarded the beard as a sign of freedom and respect; and to pluck out the hair of the beard is to show utter contempt. The most heinous and degrading insult is to spit in the face of another. It is nothing short of impossible to willingly subject oneself to such humiliation without resentment, rebellion and perhaps revenge. But the Servant did it! (cf. Mt. 26:67; 27:26; Jn. 19:1ff). And He did it for us!

v. 7-9 DEFENDED: The power of the Servant to render such unreserved obedience is in His unreserved trust in Jehovah to vindicate Him. Whatever the Servant has to suffer, Jehovah will ultimately make right. Furthermore, Jehovah will give the Servant divine assistance. The Servant's secret is godly faith and dependence (cf. Heb. 5:7) that Jehovah will, in His own good time, turn the Servant's humiliation into everlasting exaltation. So the Servant sets His face "like a flint" to do Jehovah's will (cf. Lk. 9:51-53). The Hebrew word *hallamiys* is translated "flint" but Young says it is comparable to the

Akkaddian word *elmesu* which means *diamond*. The point to be illustrated is that the Servant will not be deterred by anything from doing the will of Jehovah because the servant has complete confidence in Jehovah's justification. The reason the Servant has such confidence is His constant companionship and communion with Jehovah (cf. Jn. 14:10-11; 15:9-10; 16:25-28; 17:1-26, etc.). Jesus knew, mentally, emotionally and experientially the constant presence of Jehovah and He *lived*, not by bread alone, but by God's abiding presence (Mt. 4:4; Jn. 4:34)—that is how *near* God was to Jesus. When God justifies, who is there to condemn (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)?! The enemies of the Servant abused Him, slandered Him, perjured themselves bearing false witness against Him, tormented Him, accused Him and crucified Him as a criminal, but God raised Him from the dead showing the Servant was right and not His accusers! The cause of the Servant's enemies was "as full of holes as a garment eaten by moths." They went the way of all flesh, but the Servant lives forever! The same exaltation given the Servant is offered to all who faithfully serve the Servant. If we belong to the Servant, God is for us. If God is for us, who can be against us! We are justified because our faith is in the justified Servant.

QUIZ

1. What characteristic of the Servant is being stressed in this text?
2. Why did the Servant need to experience obedience?
3. What is the meaning of "morning by morning"?
4. Why say the Servant "gave" his back to the smiters?
5. How did the Servant have the ability to render such unreserved obedience?
6. How did Jehovah justify the Servant?

c. OUTCOME CONFIRMED

TEXT: 50:10-11

- 10 Who is among you that feareth Jehovah, that obeyeth the voice of his servant? he that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and rely upon his God.
- 11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that gird yourselves about with firebrands; walk ye in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

QUERIES

- a. How could people of Isaiah's day obey the "servant"?
- b. What is the "fire" that is kindled?

PARAPHRASE

Whoever among Israel says he fears Jehovah must give obedient belief to all I have said about the coming Servant. There will be times when you will have to struggle through dark hours of tribulation because you belong to Jehovah and you may not be able to understand it all. Remember what I say about My Servant. He too shall suffer dark tribulation. But you, Israel, follow the Servants obedient life and trust in the name of Jehovah. Put yourself totally dependent upon your God. On the other hand, you among Israel who ignite the hellish fire of rebellion against Me and My Servant and arm yourselves with the fiery darts of Satan, you go ahead and build your fires as big as you want and gather as many of Satan's firebrands as you desire. Those who play with that fire are sure to be burned up with it. I will take this fire you have ignited and turn it upon you and you will be struck down to suffer torments.

COMMENTS

v. 10 **STRENGTH:** Israel is offered two options in relation to Jehovah's prediction of the coming Servant. The outcome depends on one's attitude toward Jehovah's coming Servant. Parenthetically, it may be well to point out here that the "Servant" cannot possibly be the nation Israel since fearing the Lord and hearkening to the voice of the Servant are synonymous. Harkening to human Israel (even the best of Israel) cannot be seriously equated with fearing Jehovah. By "obeying" the voice of the Servant is meant believing, accepting and obeying the predictions of the coming Servant insofar as their limited revelation of God's will at that time would direct them in such obedience. Israel must believe that God's redemptive purposes were to be fulfilled in a coming "suffering Christ" (I Pet. 1:10-12) and prepare themselves to be used by Jehovah as the instrument of that coming by obeying God's instructions for them. Israel may have to walk in centuries of "darkness" (tribulation and indignation) but she must trust in the name of Jehovah and *yisshae'n* (Hebrew for "lean upon for support") *rely* upon God. Israel is to follow the example of the mysterious Servant who will come and be willingly obedient even in the face of extreme humiliation. Then Israel may expect to be vindicated and exalted as is predicted of the Servant. That is Israel's first option—the one Jehovah desires she choose.

v. 11 **SORROW:** The other option is rebellion. Those who opt for rebellion are those who play with fire. Fire is used chiefly as a figure of destruction, doom, torment, wrath, anger. Those who rebel against God are toying with forces that destroy those who continue to kindle them. Rebellion against the Creator is self-destructive for the creature (Rom. 1:18ff). Jehovah speaks ironically, "walk ye in the flame of your fire . . ." or, "Go ahead and rebel if you insist. . . ." (cf. Isa. 1:2, 20; Ezek. 2:3; 20:8, 13, 21; Dan. 9:5, 9; Isa. 30:1, 9; 65:2, etc.). The Lord will take this rebellion in His hand and turn it against the rebels until they are struck down in sorrow. Rebellion can never lead to happiness. It always leads to sorrow. When the

Jewish people rejected their Servant-Messiah their rebellion eventuated in the Roman holocaust. The sorrow of the Jew has been unceasing. He can never find happiness until he "obeys the voice of the Servant."

QUIZ

1. Why does this verse preclude the possibility of national Israel being the "Servant"?
2. How may Israel of Isaiah's day obey the voice of the Servant?
3. Why is rebellion self-destructive?
4. How did the rebellion of the Jews against the Servant lead to their sorrow?

3. RULE, CHAPTER 51

a. TURN TO JUSTICE

TEXT: 51:1-8

- 1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Jehovah: look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged.
- 2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him, and made him many.
- 3 For Jehovah hath comforted Zion; he hath comforted all her waste places, and hath made her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Jehovah; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.
- 4 Attend unto me, O my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall go forth from me, and I will establish my justice for a light of the peoples.
- 5 My righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the peoples; the isles shall wait for me, and on mine arm shall they trust.