

# CHAPTER 50

## INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 50

This chapter is a prophecy of the rejection of the Jews, for their neglect and contempt of the Messiah; and of his discharge of his office as Mediator, and fitness for it. The rejection of the Jews is signified by the divorce of a woman from her husband, and by persons selling their children to their creditors; which is not to be charged upon the Lord, but was owing to their own iniquities, (<sup><2810></sup>Isaiah 50:1), particularly their disregard of the Messiah, and inattention to him, as if he was an insufficient Saviour; whereas his power to redeem is evident, from his drying up the sea and rivers below, and clothing the heavens above with black clouds, and eclipsing the luminaries thereof, (<sup><2810></sup>Isaiah 50:2,3), his fitness for his prophetic office is expressed in (<sup><2810></sup>Isaiah 50:4). His obedience to his Father, and his patience in sufferings, while performing his priestly office, (<sup><2810></sup>Isaiah 50:5,6), and his faith and confidence in the Lord, as man and Mediator, that he should be helped, carried through his work, and acquitted; and not be confounded, overcome, and condemned, (<sup><2810></sup>Isaiah 50:7-9), and the chapter is closed with an exhortation to the saints to trust in the Lord in the darkest times; and a threatening to such who trust in themselves, and in their own doings, (<sup><2810></sup>Isaiah 50:10,11).

**Ver. 1.** *Thus saith the Lord*, &c.] Here begins a new discourse or prophecy, and therefore thus prefaced, and is continued in the following chapter:

*where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away?* these words are directed to the Jews, who stood in the same relation to the Jewish church, or synagogue, as children to a mother; and so the Targum interprets "your mother" by "your congregation", or synagogue; who were rejected from being a church and people; had a "loammi" written upon them, which became very manifest when their city and temple were destroyed by the Romans; and this is signified by a divorce, alluding to the law of divorce among the Jews, (<sup><6240></sup>Deuteronomy 24:1-4), when a man put away his wife, he gave her a bill of divorce, assigning the causes of his putting her away. Now, the Lord, either as denying that he had put away

their mother, the Jewish church, she having departed from him herself, and therefore challenges them to produce any such bill; a bill of divorce being always put into the woman's hands, and so capable of being produced by her; or if there was such an one, (see <sup><2488></sup>Jeremiah 3:8), he requires it might be looked into, and seen whether the fault was his, or the cause in themselves, which latter would appear:

*or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?* referring to a practice used, that when men were in debt, and could not pay their debts, they sold their children for the payment of them; (see <sup><1210></sup>Exodus 21:7 <sup><1100></sup>2 Kings 4:1 <sup><4601></sup>Nehemiah 5:1-5), but this could not be the case here; the Lord has no creditors, not any to whom he is indebted, nor could any advantage possibly accrue to him by the sale of them; it is true they were sold to the Romans, or delivered into their hands, which, though a loss to them, was no gain to him; nor was it he that sold them, but they themselves; he was not the cause of it, but their own sins, as follows:

*behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves;* or, "are sold"<sup>f991</sup>; they were sold for them, or delivered up into the hands of their enemies on account of them; they had sold themselves to work wickedness, and therefore it was but just that they should be sold, and become slaves:

*and for your transgressions is your mother put away;* and they her children along with her, out of their own land, and from being the church and people of God.

**Ver. 2.** *Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?* &c.] The Targum is, "why have I sent my prophets, and they are not converted?"

And so Aben Ezra and Kimchi interpret it of the prophets that prophesied unto them, to bring them to repentance: the Lord might be said to come by his prophets, his messengers; but they did not receive them, nor their messages, but despised and rejected them, and therefore were carried captive, (<sup><4435></sup>2 Chronicles 36:15,16), but it is best to understand it of the coming of Christ in the flesh; when there were none that would receive, nor even come to him, but hid their faces from him, nor suffer others to be gathered unto him, or attend his ministry; they would neither go in themselves into the kingdom of the Messiah, nor let others go in that were entering, (<sup><4011></sup>John 1:11 5:40 <sup><4233></sup>Matthew 23:13, 37),

*when I called, was there none to answer?* he called them to the marriage feast, to his word and ordinances, but they made light of it, and went about their worldly business; many were called externally in his ministry, but few were chosen, and effectually wrought upon; he called, but there was no answer given; for there was no internal principle in them, no grace to answer to the call; he stretched out his hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people, (<sup><412></sup>Matthew 22:2-5,16 <sup><236></sup>Isaiah 65:2 <sup><102></sup>Proverbs 1:24),

*is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?* they did not know him to be the mighty God; they took him to be a mere man; and being descended from such mean parents, and making such a mean appearance, they could not think he was able to be their Redeemer and Saviour; but that he had sufficient ability appears by what follows:

*behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea;* he was able to do it, and did do it for the children of Israel, and made a passage through the Red sea for them, as on dry land; which was done by a strong east wind he caused to blow, here called his “rebuke”, (<sup><124></sup>Exodus 14:20,21 <sup><946></sup>Psalms 106:9), of Christ’s rebuking the sea, (see <sup><188></sup>Matthew 8:26).

*I make the rivers a wilderness;* as dry as the wilderness, and parched ground; in which persons may pass as on dry ground, and as travellers pass through a wilderness; so Jordan was made for the Israelites, (<sup><187></sup>Joshua 3:17), and may be here particularly meant; called “rivers” because of the excellency of it, and the abundance of water in it, which sometimes overflowed its banks; and because other rivers fall into it, as Kimchi observes:

*their flesh stinketh because there is no water, and dieth for thirst;* as they did when the rivers of Egypt were turned into blood, (<sup><107></sup>Exodus 7:21).

**Ver. 3.** *I clothe the heavens with blackness,* &c.] With gross and thick darkness; perhaps referring to the three days’ darkness the Egyptians were in, (<sup><112></sup>Exodus 10:12-23), or with thick and black clouds, as in tempestuous weather frequently; or by eclipses of the sun; there was an extraordinary instance of great darkness at the time of Christ’s crucifixion, (<sup><475></sup>Matthew 27:45)

*and I make sackcloth their covering;* that being black, and used in times of mourning; the allusion may be to the tents of Kedar, which were covered with sackcloth, or such like black stuff. The fall of the Pagan empire,

through the power of Christ and his Gospel, is signified by the sun becoming black as sackcloth of hair, (<sup>662</sup>Revelation 6:12). Jarchi interprets this parabolically of the princes of the nations, when the Lord shall come to take vengeance upon them; as Kimchi does the sea, and the rivers, in the preceding verse, of the good things of the nations of the world, which they had in great abundance, and should be destroyed.

**Ver. 4.** *The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, &c.*] These are not the words of the prophet, as Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and others think; though what is here said is applicable to ministers of the word, who have to do with weary souls, and it is their work to comfort and refresh them; and which work requires knowledge and experience of their case, a good degree of elocution to speak aptly and with propriety, even to have the tongue of the learned, especially in a spiritual sense; as such have who have learned of the Father, and have been taught by the Spirit of God, and are well versed in the Scriptures, and can speak in the taught words of the Holy Ghost, comparing spiritual things with spiritual; and they have need of great prudence to time things right, to speak fitly and opportunely, and give to each their portion in due season, to whom they minister; and also great diligence and assiduity in prayer, reading, and meditation; and such as are teachers of others must be the Lord's hearers, and should be very diligent and attentive ones; all which are gifts from the Lord, and to be ascribed to him. But the words are to be understood of Christ, the same person that is speaking in the preceding verses; who being anointed by the Spirit of the Lord God, as man, whose gifts and graces he received without measure, he was abundantly qualified for the discharge of his prophetic office; and was capable of speaking as never man did, and with such power and authority as the Scribes and Pharisees did not, and with so much wisdom and eloquence as were surprising to all that heard him; he had the Spirit of wisdom on him, and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in him:

*that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary;* not only saints, weary with sin, their own and others, and with troubles from the world, from Satan, and by afflictive providences; but sinners under first awakenings, distressed and uneasy in their minds at a sight of sin, in its exceeding sinfulness; pressed with the guilt of it, filled with a sense of divine wrath on account of it, and terrified with the thoughts of death, and a future judgment; and are weary with labouring for bread which satisfies not, for righteousness and life, and in seeking for resting places, being in

want of spiritual rest, peace, and comfort; and who are hungry and thirsting after righteousness, after pardoning grace and mercy, after Christ and salvation by him, after his word and ordinances, after communion with him, and conformity to him; who are weak and without strength, and ready to faint for want of refreshment. The word for “weary” signifies “thirsty”, according to Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech; who explain it of persons that thirst after hearing the word of the Lord: the Targum is,

“to know how to teach the righteous that weary themselves at the words of the law;”

or, as some render it, that pant after the words of the law: but not the law, but the Gospel, is “the word in season”, to be spoken to weary souls; which proclaims pardon, preaches peace, is the word of righteousness and salvation; which directs hungry and thirsty souls to Christ, as the bread and water of life, and invites weary ones to him for rest. That word of his, (<sup><4112></sup>Matthew 11:28,29) is a word in season to such persons: such a word Christ spoke when he was here on earth in his own person, and now speaks by his ministers in the preaching of the Gospel, and by his Spirit applying it to his people.

*He wakeneth morning by morning*; one after another continually, meaning himself; the allusion is to masters calling their scholars early to their studies; the morning being the fittest season for instruction and learning.

*He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned*; who hear attentively, and with great pleasure and profit. This and the preceding clause seem to denote both the earliness in which Christ entered on his prophetic office, and his attentiveness in hearkening to all that was said in the eternal council and covenant by his divine Father; which he, as the Prophet of his church, makes known unto his people, (<sup><415></sup>John 15:15).

**Ver. 5.** *The Lord God hath opened mine ear, &c.*] To hear most freely, and receive most fully, what is said by him, and to observe and do it: the allusion seems to be to the servant that had his ears bored, being willing to serve his master for ever, (<sup><1215></sup>Exodus 21:5,6) which phrase of boring or opening the ear is used of Christ, (<sup><3415></sup>Psalms 40:6). It is expressive of his voluntary obedience, as Mediator, to his divine Father, engaging in, and performing with the greatest readiness and cheerfulness, the great work of man’s redemption and salvation.

*And I was not rebellious*; not to his earthly parents, to whom he was subject; nor to civil magistrates, to whom he paid tribute; nor to God, he always did the things that pleased him: he was obedient to the precepts of the moral law, and to the penalty of it, death itself, and readily submitted to the will of God in suffering for his people; which obedience of his was entirely free and voluntary, full, complete, and perfect, done in the room and stead of his people; is the measure of their righteousness, and by which they become righteous; is well pleasing to God, and infinitely preferable to the obedience of men and angels:

*neither turned away back*; he did not decline the work proposed to him, but readily engaged in it; he never stopped in it, or desisted from it, until he had finished it; he did not hesitate about it, as Moses and Jeremy; or flee from it, as Jonah.

**Ver. 6.** *I gave my back to the smiters*, &c.] To Pontius Pilate, and those he ordered to scourge him, (<sup><4776></sup>Matthew 27:26)

*and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair*; of the beard; which, is painful, so a great indignity and affront. The Septuagint renders it, “and my cheeks to blows”; *εις ραπισματα*, a word used by the evangelists when they speak of Christ being smitten and stricken with the palms of men’s hands, and seem to refer to this passage, (<sup><4146></sup>Mark 14:65 <sup><4822></sup>John 18:22 <sup><3311></sup>Micah 5:1):

*I hid not my face from shame and spitting*; or from shameful spitting; they spit in his face, and exposed him to shame, and which was a shameful usage of him, and yet he took it patiently, (<sup><4867></sup>Matthew 26:67), these are all instances of great shame and reproach; as what is more reproachful among us, or more exposes a man, than to be stripped of his clothes, receive lashes on his bare back, and that in public? in which ignominious manner Christ was used: or what reckoned more scandalous, than for a man to have his beard plucked by a mob? which used to be done by rude and wanton boys, to such as were accounted idiots, and little better than brutes<sup>1992</sup>; and nothing is more affronting than to spit in a man’s face. So Job was used, which he mentions as a great indignity done to him, (<sup><43010></sup>Job 30:10). With some people, and in some countries, particular places, that were mean and despicable, were appointed for that use particularly to spit in. Hence Aristippus the philosopher, being shown a fine room in a house, beautifully and richly paved, spat in the face of the owner of it; at which he

being angry, and resenting it, the philosopher replied, that he had not a fitter place to spit in<sup>f993</sup>.

**Ver. 7.** *For the Lord God will help me, &c.*] As he promised he would, and did, (<sup>4321</sup>Psalm 89:21 <sup>2308</sup>Isaiah 49:8), which is no contradiction to the deity of Christ, nor any suggestion of weakness in him; for he is the true God, and has all divine perfections in him; is equal to his Father in power, as well as in glory, and therefore equal to the work of redemption, as his other works show him to be; but this is to be understood of him as man, and expresses his strong faith and confidence in God, and in his promises as such; and in his human nature he was weak, and was crucified through weakness, and in it he was made strong by the Lord, and was held and upheld by him: and this shows the greatness of the work of man's redemption, that it was such that no mere creature could effect; even Christ as man needed help and assistance in it; and also the concern that all the divine Persons had in it:

*therefore shall I not be confounded*; or "made ashamed"<sup>f994</sup>; though shamefully used, yet not confounded; so as to have nothing to say for himself, or so as to be ashamed of his work; which is perfect in itself, and well pleasing to God:

*therefore have I set my face like a flint*: or like "steel"<sup>f995</sup>; or as an adamant stone, as some<sup>f996</sup> render it; hardened against all opposition; resolute and undaunted; constant and unmoved by the words and blows of men; not to be browbeaten, or put out of countenance, by anything they can say or do. He was not dismayed at his enemies who came to apprehend him, though they came to him as a thief, with swords and staves; nor in the high priest's palace, nor in Pilate's hall, in both which places he was roughly used; nor at Satan, and his principalities and powers; nor at death itself, with all its terrors.

*And I know that I shall not be ashamed*, neither of his ministry, which was with power and authority; nor of his miracles, which were proofs of his deity and Messiahship; nor of his obedience, which was pure, and perfect, and pleasing to God; nor of his sufferings, which were for the sake of his people; nor of the work of redemption and salvation, in which he was not frustrated nor disappointed of his end.

**Ver. 8.** *He is near that justifieth me, &c.*] His Father was "near" him in his whole state of humiliation; he left him not alone; he was at his right hand,

and therefore he was not moved; and “justified” him from all the calumnies of his enemies, or the false charges they brought against him, and from all the sins of his people that were upon him; these he took upon him, and bore them, and made satisfaction for them, upon which he was acquitted; and which is evident by his resurrection from the dead, by his ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God; and by the gifts of the Spirit, extraordinary and ordinary, he received for men, and gave unto them; (see <sup><4816></sup>1 Timothy 3:16).

*Who will contend with me?* being thus acquitted; will the law and justice of God litigate the point with him? they are both satisfied; will Satan dispute the matter with him? he is foiled, conquered, and destroyed; or will the wicked Jews enter the argument with him? wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

*Let us stand together;* face to face, if they dare; let them face me, if they can:

*who is mine adversary?* let him appear, that he may be known:

*let him come near to me:* and engage with me, if he has courage or skill. This is bidding defiance to all his enemies, and triumphing over them.

**Ver. 9.** *Behold, the Lord God will help me,* &c.] This is repeated from <sup><2817></sup>Isaiah 50:7, (See Gill on “<sup><2817></sup>Isaiah 50:7”); to show the certainty of it, the strength of his faith in it, and to discourage his enemies:

*who is he that shall condemn me?* make me out a wicked person<sup>f997</sup>, prove me guilty, and pass sentence upon me, when thus acquitted and justified by the Lord God? The Apostle Paul seems to have some reference to this passage in (<sup><4833></sup>Romans 8:33,34),

*lo, they all shall waste old as doth a garment;* his enemies, those that accused him, the Scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests; and those that condemned him, the Jewish sanhedrim, and the Roman governor:

*the moth shall eat them up;* they shall be like a worn out or motheaten garment, that can never be used more. The phrases denote how secret, insensible, and irrecoverable, their ruin should be, both in their civil and church state, all being abolished and done away.

**Ver. 10.** *Who is among you that feareth the Lord?* &c.] Not with a slavish fear of the awful majesty of God, or of his tremendous judgments, or of



wrath to come, but with a filial fear, a fear of the Lord, and his goodness, which is an internal principle in the heart, a reverential affection for God, a godly fear of him; is attended with faith in him, and joy of him; which makes holy, and keeps humble, and takes in the whole worship of God: of men of this character there are but few, and especially there were but few among the Jews at this time which the prophecy refers to; the greatest part were rejecters of Christ, before spoken of, and to; and from whom the Lord turns himself, and addresses these few. There are none that naturally fear the Lord, only such who have the grace bestowed on them; their number is but small, but there are always some in the worst of times, and these are taken notice of by the Lord, (<sup>3985</sup>Malachi 3:16,17 4:2),

*that obeyeth the voice of his servant*: not the prophet, as the Targum adds, and as it is commonly interpreted by the Jewish writers, and others; though some of them say<sup>f998</sup> this is “Metatron”, a name of the Messiah with them; and indeed he is meant, before spoken of as the Lord’s servant, and represented as an obedient one, and afterwards as righteous; (see <sup>2308</sup>Isaiah 49:3 50:5,6 53:11) and by his “voice” is meant either his Gospel, which is a soul quickening and comforting voice, a charming and alluring one; and which is obeyed, heard, and hearkened to, by his people, externally and internally, when they receive it by faith, and in the love of it; or else his commands, precepts, and ordinances, which love constrains his people to an obedience unto; and where there is the fear of God, there will be hearing of his word, and submission to his ordinances:

*that walketh in darkness*: not the Lord’s servant, but the man that fears the Lord, and obeys his servant’s voice, such an one may be in darkness, and walk in it; or “in darkneses”<sup>f999</sup>, as in the original; not only in affliction and misery, often expressed by darkness in Scripture, but in desertion, under the hidings of God’s face; and which may continue for a while:

*and hath no light*? or “shining”<sup>f1000</sup>: not without the light of nature, nor without the light of grace, but without the light of God’s countenance shining upon him; without the light of spiritual joy and comfort shining in his heart; and this must be a very distressing case indeed.

*Let him trust in the name of the Lord*; not in himself, nor in any creature, but in the Lord himself; in the perfections of his nature, his mercy, grace, and goodness; in the name of the Lord, which is a strong tower, and in whom is salvation; in Christ, in whom the name of the Lord is, and whose

name is the Lord our Righteousness; and to trust in him, when in the dark, is a glorious act of faith; this is believing in hope against hope.

*And stay upon his God*; covenant interest continues in the darkest dispensation; God is the believer's God still; and faith is a staying or leaning upon him, as such; a dependence upon his power to protect, on his wisdom to guide, and on his grace, goodness, and all sufficiency, to supply.

**Ver. 11.** *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire*, &c.] To enlighten and warm yourselves; who, rejecting Christ the Light of the world, and despising the glorious light of his Gospel, and loving darkness rather than light, set up the light of nature and reason as the rule of faith and practice; or the traditions and doctrines of men to be guided by; or their own righteousness for their justification before God, and acceptance with him:

*that compass yourselves about with sparks*, that fly out of the fire kindled, or are struck out of a flint, which have little light and no heat, and are soon out; which may denote the short lived pleasures and comforts which are had from the creature, or from anything of a man's own:

*walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled*; an ironical expression, bidding them take all the comfort and satisfaction they could in their own works and doings, and get all the light and heat they could from thence:

*this shall ye have of mine hand*; which you may depend upon receiving from me, for rejecting me and my righteousness, and trusting in your own:

*ye shall lie down in sorrow*; instead of being justified hereby, and having peace with God, and entering into heaven, ye shall be pressed down with sore distress, die in your sins, and enter into an everlasting state of condemnation and death; (see Mark 16:16). This was the case and state of the Jews, (~~see~~ Romans 9:31,32 10:3 ~~see~~ John 8:24 3:19,20). This is one of the passages the Jews<sup>f1001</sup> say is repeated by the company of angels, which meet a wicked man at death.