

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 116

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Christ Before Pilate by Derick Baegert Cir 1480

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

One-Hundred-Sixteen

THE HUMILIATION OF THE HOLY ONE

June 20, 2021

Daniel E. Woodhead

Isaiah 50:1–11

Thus saith Jehovah, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, 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. ²Wherefore, 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. ³I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

⁴The 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. ⁵The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. ⁶I 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. ⁷For 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. ⁸He 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. ⁹Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? behold, all they shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up.

¹⁰Who 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. ¹¹Behold, 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 (ASV, 1901).

GOD SEPARATES FROM ISRAEL

Isaiah 50:1

¹Thus, saith Jehovah, Where, is the bill of your mother's divorcement, 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 (ASV, 1901).

Because of the massive sins of the Israelites God said that He was sending them into captivity in Babylon because as He says, *for your iniquities were ye sold*. He is not divorcing them according to the Mosaic Law expressed in the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 24:1–4

¹When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. ²And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. ³And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife; ⁴her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before Jehovah: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance (ASV, 1901).

Whenever a husband wanted to divorce his wife, he had to write out a bill of divorcement. After having written it out in longhand, he would give it to his wife and then the divorce was final. This sounds cruel but it was for the benefit of the wife to release her from a potential physical harm from an abusive husband. By the time Isaiah became a prophet, Israel's spiritual adultery was so great that it was necessary for God to withhold His many blessings from her. The blessings described in the Book of Deuteronomy, and Leviticus were promised to be received if Israel remained faithful. Because it was commonly thought that God had given Israel a bill of divorcement, God is here speaking to the Jews saying that He had not yet divorced them. He had not issued them the bill, therefore there was no divorce. The reference to the mother is their national heritage, whereas the divorcement in Deuteronomy is referencing individuals. Furthermore, he calls them to show any creditor who could have forced Him to sell them against His will. No, it is their fault (for your sins) that they have been put away and sold, not God's.

Instead of a divorce, a separation would be taking place. But the separation was caused by their own sins. The sin of Israel in committing spiritual adultery created the need for the separation. In the days of Isaiah, God and Israel were not divorced, but they were separated. This separation was due to Israel's adultery and lasted approximately one hundred years.

ISRAEL DID NOT RELY ON GOD

Isaiah 50:2–3

²Wherefore, 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. ³I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering (ASV, 1901).

The prophets that the Lord sent unto them (Amos 3:7), in order to bring them to repentance were not received by them, nor were their messages, but despised and rejected, and therefore they were carried away to captivity in Babylon. The same can be said of the coming of Christ who is God in

the flesh. The leaders in Israel would not receive, nor even come to Him, but hid their faces from Him and denied His deity (John 10:33) Nor would they allow others to be gathered unto Him, or attend His ministry, especially after His ascension back to Heaven. They were not going in themselves into the kingdom of the Messiah, nor would they let others go in that were entering (John 1:11 and 5:40; Matthew 23:13, 37).

God is basically saying that He has the power to redeem and the people rejected Him. He uses the anthropomorphic references to His body to say that His hand is not so short that it cannot deliver. He then gives example of His power through Him during the events leading up to the Exodus when He dried up the Red Sea. He says that *their fish stink, because there is no water, and die for thirst*, as they did when the rivers of Egypt were turned into blood in the plagues He gave to Egypt before the Exodus. Finally, He cites His creative efforts in the Cosmos as evidence affirming His capability to redeem.

THE TRAINING OF THE SERVANT

Isaiah 50:4–9

⁴The 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. ⁵The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. ⁶I 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. ⁷For 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. ⁸He 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. ⁹Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? behold, all they shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up (ASV, 1901).

The reference here is to the Messiah, the Servant. Here is a beautiful description of His character, and of some of the key events of His life. This verse is designed to state how he was fitted for the peculiar work to which He was called. This describes the learning or disciplining of Him as the Servant. During His boyhood in Nazareth, every morning, Jesus was awakened by His Heavenly Father in the early hours of the morning to receive instruction through prayer. In this way Jesus learned who He was, what His mission was, and how to act and react accordingly.

In verse 5, we are told that Jesus learned all that was required of Him, that He must suffer and die. By the time Jesus' ministry became public, He was not rebellious and did not draw back. When the time came, He willingly submitted Himself to His tormentors. The abuses described here are all fully described in the Gospels during both His religious and civil trials.

The whole enablement of the Messiah is traced back to God the Father, to Jehovah. It was He who had called Him, He who had given him the tongue of the learned, and He who had carefully and attentively qualified Him for His special earthly redemptive work. He was granted with intelligence, and with special eloquence. In regard to the Servant's power of instruction, the discourses which He delivered, as recorded in the New Testament, and especially His sermon on

the mount, Olivet Discourse and the parables are examples. None ever spoke like Him and there was no one who was ever so well qualified to instruct mankind like Him (Matthew 13:54). *That I may know how to sustain with words him that is weary.* The Hebrew here should be translated as, ‘*That I might know how to strengthen with a word the weary;*’ that is, that He might sustain, comfort, and refresh them by His promises and His comfort. Nobody was ever so equipped to alleviate those who were heavy laden with sin, and to comfort those who were burdened with distress and trials. The *weary* here are those who are burdened with a sense of guilt, who feel that they have no strength to bear up under the mighty load, and who therefore seek relief (Matthew 11:28). The Redeemer would be eminently endowed, under the Divine instruction and guidance, for His work. He would be one who was, as it were, in the school of God; and who would be qualified to impart instruction to others.

He was attentive as they are who wish to learn, that is, as expectant disciples. The figure is taken from a rabbi who in the morning summons his pupils around him, and imparts instruction to them. And the doctrine which is taught is, that the Messiah would be eminently qualified, by Divine teaching, to be the Instructor of mankind.

I gave my back to the smiters, that is, I submitted willingly to be scourged, or whipped. This is one of the parts of this chapter that is obviously the Messiah. This was literally fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:26; Luke 18:33).

My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair The Septuagint renders this, ‘*I gave my cheeks to buffeting*’ that is, to being smitten with the open hand, which was again clearly fulfilled in the life of Jesus the Redeemer (Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:65). The general sense of this expression is, that He would be treated with the highest insult.

Continuing with the physical humiliation the text says, *I hid not my face from shame and spitting.* To spit on any one was regarded, as an expression of the highest insult and indignity (Deuteronomy 25:9; Numbers 12:14; Job 30:10). Spitting upon one was a humiliating act that was performed in reference to the Redeemer (Matthew 26:67; 27:30). During this expression of their hatred of Him He remained meek. This expression is one of the proofs that this entire passage refers to the Messiah. It is said (Matthew 26:67) that these prophecies should be fulfilled by His being spit upon, and there is no other prophecy of the Old Testament except this which fulfills this prediction. Being Deity Himself, He knew that God the Father would sustain Him through all these expressions of torture, contempt and scorn. *Shall I not be confounded.* The Hebrew says, ‘*I shall not be ashamed*’ that is, I will bear all this with the assurance of the Father’s protection, and I will triumph and prevail.

Therefore, have I set my face like a flint. In hardening His face, He says that He will take all the beatings and humiliation with courage, firmness, and resolution. This phrase says that Jesus would not give His enemies the satisfaction of seeing any facial expressions of the pain and humiliation He was experiencing. A similar expression occurs in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 3:8–9

⁸Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their foreheads. ⁹As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house (ASV, 1901).

He is *near that justifieth me*. That is, God, who sent Him and sanctioned what He does, does not leave nor forsake Him. Jesus says that, "I can with confidence commit myself and my cause to Him." The word *justify* here is not used in the sense in which it is often in the Scriptures, to refer to the act by which a sinner is justified before God, but in the judicial sense, that He would declare Him *to be* righteous, He would vindicate his character, and show him to be innocent. This was done by all the testimonies of God affirming Him by the voice which spoke from Heaven at His baptism and transfiguration, by the miracles which he did, which showed that He was commissioned and approved by God.

Who will contend with me? This question indicates confidence in God, and in the integrity of his own character. The language is taken from transactions in the courts of justice, and it is a solemn call, on any who would dare to oppose him, to enter into a trial, and allege the accusations against Him before the tribunal of a holy God. Jesus speaking concluded this section regarding the enemies who crucified Him. All His enemies shall pass away, as a garment is worn out and cast aside. The idea is, that the Messiah would survive all their attacks. His cause, His truth, and His reputation would live, while all the power, the influence, the reputation of his adversaries, would vanish as a garment that is worn out and then thrown away. He is eternal and everlasting.

We also have the account of a 12-year-old Jesus visiting the Temple in Jerusalem for the first time (Luke 2:41–50). By the age of 12 Jesus was fully conversant with the Hebrew Scriptures and able to debate deep spiritual matters with the leading theologians of the day. Further, when Jesus is later rebuked by His mother for remaining in the Temple, He replies, "*Did you not know I would be in My Father's house?*" This one statement shows that by the age of 12 Jesus knew that Joseph was not His father. He knew that God was His Father, and therefore understood that He was the Messiah of Israel. Since it is clear that in His humanity Jesus was not omniscient. The New Testament does not explain how He acquired His supernatural knowledge and learning. There are several aspects of Jesus' life which are revealed only in the Old Testament; this is one of them. Isaiah 50:4–9 gives us a picture of the learning process which Jesus went through.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

Isaiah 50:10–11

¹⁰Who 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. ¹¹Behold, 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 (ASV, 1901).

This text starts with a question, “*Who is among you that feareth Jehovah, that obeyeth the voice of his servant?*” This comes directly from Psalm 19 and Proverbs 9.

Psalm 19:9

⁹The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever: The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. ¹¹Moreover by them is thy servant warned: In keeping them there is great reward. ²Who can discern his errors? Clear thou me from hidden faults (ASV, 1901).

Proverbs 9:9–10

⁹Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: Teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. ¹⁰The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (ASV, 1901).

This fear is actually a reverential affection for God, a Godly fear of Him. It is expressed with faith in Him, and joy of Him. At the time this was written about there were few among the Jews who were in leadership in Israel who were not rejecters of Christ. There are none that naturally fear the Lord, only such who have the grace bestowed on them and given parents and good educational training.

The chapter closes with a contrasting pictures of rebellious Israel and the Servant who listens like one being taught which results in a call to decision. The one who fears the Lord and obeys the word of his Servant trusts in God to illuminate his way through the darkness. Such a person may not always be able to see the way clearly through the struggles of the present life to the end of the journey, but he has heard the testimony of the Servant and believes God will vindicate all who trust in Him. The only alternative to this path is for people to light fires and seek to discern the way of life by their own wisdom or to construct it themselves. Such efforts are futile, however, and doomed to failure. God therefore sarcastically exhorts those who refuse to trust him to pursue this approach and to see where it leads, to torment.

Next message: GOD’S CALL TO THE REMNANT

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