

## Lesson 32 Isaiah 50:4-52:12 The Third Servant Song

### Introduction

When God calls you out of spiritual exile, he calls you on a long journey home. He calls you to walk in the dark by the light of faith, believing that you have been restored to lasting relationship, believing that you are going home. Faith often falters in the dark. Zion cried out, "The Lord has forsaken us. He has forgotten us." The third Servant Song presents the Servant as a model of faithfulness in dark times. The comments following the song calls us to listen, wake up, and walk with God by the light of faith.

The third Servant Song occurs in 50:4-9. The Lord's comment on the song comes in just two verses, 50:10-11. It is an exhortation and a warning. The comment regarding Israel takes up quite a bit more text covering 51:1-52:12. There the Lord exhorts Israel to listen, wake up, and walk with God.

### The Third Servant Song Isaiah (50:4-9)

We start with the song in Isaiah 50:4-9. In this song, the Servant models obedience and confidence in relationship with God through adverse times. We are never far in these chapters from the motif of the Egyptian Exodus. We know we are looking to future events. At the same time, looking back to the Exodus provides a framework to help us imagine the future. The Servant will be struck, spit on, and humiliated, like a slave of the Egyptian oppression. There is humiliation in Israel's future. There is also humiliation in the Servant's future. And yet, He will not be ashamed. God has prepared Him for whatever trial this is. And He has responded with teachability and obedience. After preparing the Servant for a trial, God stands by the Servant in the trial. The Servant perseveres with great confidence in that relationship. The level of confidence, in fact, is surprising. The exile of Israel to Babylon happens because of Israel's sin and rebellion. But this Servant has full confidence before a court that He will be vindicated. He is not worried at all about someone bringing a case against Him. That level of confidence is surprising in a human servant, in an Israelite who is part of a community that has been exiled for rebellion. How can He be so sure that God is on His side, that the court will find nothing at all to hold against Him?

Let's read the song, Isaiah 50:4-9.

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| 4 | The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples,<br>He awakens Me morning by morning, | That I may know how to sustain the weary one<br>with a word.<br>He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. |
| 5 | The Lord GOD has opened My ear;   | And I was not disobedient<br>Nor did I turn back.  |
| 6 | I gave My back to those who strike Me,<br>I did not cover My face                       | And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard;<br>from humiliation and spitting.                          |
| 7 | For the Lord GOD helps Me,<br>Therefore, I have set My face like flint,                 | Therefore, I am not disgraced;<br>And I know that I will not be ashamed.                                   |
| 8 | He who vindicates Me is near;<br><br>Who has a case against Me?                         | Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to<br>each other;<br>Let him draw near to Me.                    |
| 9 | Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me;<br>Behold, they will all wear out like a garment;        | Who is he who condemns Me?<br>The moth will eat them.  |

### *The Need Addressed*

In our last lesson, we looked at three things in each of the first two songs: What need does the Servant meet? How is the Servant described? And how does the Servant meet the need? Let's do the same with this third song. We start with the need. And to do that we need to clarify the first verset. My Bible gives this translation, "The Lord God has given me the tongue of disciples." Tongue of disciples. What does that mean? Looking at some other Bible translations helps. "The Lord has given me... the tongue of those who are taught... the tongue of a teacher... the tongue of the learned... an instructed tongue... a skillful tongue." That last one, a skillful tongue, is from Robert Alter. He says

the Hebrew is literally, “the disciple’s tongue”, meaning a tongue that has been rigorously trained.<sup>1</sup> Skipping the second verset for a minute, the next line tells us how the Servant has been rigorously trained in the use of the tongue.

He awakens Me morning by morning,                      He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

This Servant rises every morning, or is awakened every morning to listen as a learner, as a disciple of the Lord. That word, “disciple,” in the 4<sup>th</sup> verset of our couplet is the same Hebrew word for “disciple” in the 1<sup>st</sup> verset. The ear of the disciple produces the tongue of a disciple. The phrase, “he awakens my ear to listen,” indicates why the Servant is woken up. He is woken up at the start of the day with the purpose of listening to the instruction of God. That phrase, “he awakens my ear to listen,” could also be taken to include a work that God does in the Servant, so that the Servant can hear. The Spirit of God awakens my ear. My ear wakes up. My ear becomes spiritually aware, or sensitive to the instruction of God. That’s a contrast to the audience Isaiah has way back at his calling in chapter 6. Isaiah was told that this people is not going to have an ear to hear. In fact, his preaching the good news to them is going to result in a dullness. Their ears are dull, they are insensitive. They do not hear; keep on listening, but do not perceive. In contrast, this Servant can hear what God has to say because His ear has been awakened.

God awakens the Servant’s ear to listen to instruction as a disciple and one of the things He is instructed in is the skillful use of the tongue. How does the Servant put His skillful tongue to use? That’s the verset I skipped. The Servant tells us, “[My tongue has been trained] that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.”

That’s a clear need. The weary believer needs to be sustained by the words of a skilled disciple of the Lord. The Servant also reveals through His own character and actions how a believer continues in his or her walk with God and becomes a blessing to others as a servant of God. We need words to sustain us. We also need a model, so that we can see how the walk of faith works. And we also need to get to the point where we, who are weary and need sustaining are also the ones who give words of encouragement to sustain others who are weary. We want, also, to have the skilled tongue of a disciple and the receptive ear of the disciple.

There is a sense where the needs of the Servant Songs follow one from the other. The first Song declared the need for justice on the Earth. But justice has this problem. Justice condemns everyone. No human being escapes the penalty of death due for sin and rebellion. How, then, does God gather a people to Himself? Even those willing to come still need to pay the penalty for their sin. That need was addressed in the second Song. Along with justice, the Servant will restore Israel and provide salvation from God’s just wrath to the ends of the Earth. But restoration to relationship with God has this problem. Restoration is not accomplished all at once in the beginning. Glorious Zion is future. Our new bodies are future. We are saved and restored to relationship immediately. But our experience of the perfect Zion is not fully realized until much later. So we live in the already-and-not-yet of a long journey home. We must walk through darkness, not yet experiencing or seeing the promised future reality. We must walk by the light of faith. And we need a model to follow. We need words to sustain us. That’s the need addressed in this third Song.

We also learn in this third Song more about the Servant. And in this song the description of the Servant overlaps with the manner by which He accomplishes His task. So, we can talk about both of them at the same time. His task is to model the life of faith. So the manner by which he does that is the description of the Servant. How does he do it? What characteristics stand out?

#### *The Servant Described*

The word, “servant,” is not used in this song to describe the speaker, but it is used in verse 10 by the Lord to describe Him. This Servant’s skillfully uses the Word, and that connects Him to the previous two Servant Songs. In the first Song, the Servant does not speak as one crying out to be heard in the

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Alter. *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2019) 1948.

street: a bruised reed he does not break (42:2-3). In the second Song, his mouth is like a sharp sword (49:2). In this Song, He speaks with a skillful tongue to strengthen the weary.

The Servant's effectiveness in accomplishing His task is always affirmed in the Songs. The second Song, however, introduced a note of struggle, "I have toiled in vain" (49:4). This third Song goes further. Not only will this servant be opposed in the accomplishment of His task. This servant will suffer.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

Whatever this suffering is, it sets up the context by which the Servant becomes our model. He is walks through darkness, and pain, and rejection. And he is both receptive to the Word of God, and He is obedient to the Word He receives. Receptivity and obedience are emphasized in verse 5.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord GOD has opened My ear;                                      And I was not disobedient  
Nor did I turn back.

The context of suffering shows that He is resilient and persevering in His obedience.

<sup>7</sup> For the Lord GOD helps Me,    Therefore, I am not disgraced;  
Therefore, I have set My face like flint,                                      And I know that I will not be ashamed.

It's not only the physical pain of suffering that causes us to give up and turn away from the walk of faith. The psychological side of suffering creates doubt and it saps motivation. This Servant knows what He believes. The opponents who spit on Him and pull out the beard don't just want to hurt Him. They want to humiliate Him. They want Him to believe He has failed. They want Him to think God opposes Him. They want Him to think He is rejected by society. Maybe, to use a modern term, they want Him to believe he is on the wrong side of history. But He does not accept their attempt to shame Him. He has set His face like flint. He is firm in His belief in God despite His own suffering, despite the opposition, despite the attempt to humiliate. He is confident in His future with God.

Motyer uses the adjective, "buoyant."<sup>2</sup> He floats on top of the waters, because of His confidence in who God is and what God has called Him to do. And he makes others buoyant, lifting them up with His example and words.

The Servant's confidence in His mission is linked to His confidence in God and in His confidence that God is on His side. He does not fear wrath from God. He expects vindication by God.

<sup>8</sup> 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.  
<sup>9</sup> 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.

And you get the confidence. Not only does He say, "Who will contend with me?" He says, "Let us stand up to each other. Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me." It's like saying, "Bring it on! Let's stand face-to-face. You've got something to say about me? Come and say it right in front of me." The servant's confidence in His position with God inspired the Apostle Paul in his confidence in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I'll read Romans 8:31-34 and you'll recognize Isaiah.

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup> who is the one who condemns?

Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ we are able to speak the words of the Servant. Jesus is our model. The pulling of the beard, the spitting, the turning His back, this is the suffering that Jesus took on

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<sup>2</sup> J. A. Motyer. *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 393.

Himself, and the aspect of humiliation is strong. The point of the beating of Jesus and the point of the cross was to humiliate Him. Though, what does Hebrews 12:3 say? "He scorned the cross." He looked ahead to the joy that was before Him. He knew what He was doing. He set his face like flint because He knew His mission and He knew His God. What does it look like to walk through dark times by the light of faith? It looks like this: receptive, obedient, resilient, persevering, buoyant, and confident. He models for us what it looks like to walk with God and to speak words to sustain us as we walk with Him.

That's the third Servant Song. Now comes the Lord's comment on the Song.

### **The Lord's Comment (50:10-11)**

The Lord's comment consists of only two verses, 50:10 and 11. The first verse calls the Israelites to persevere just as the Servant perseveres. When all is dark, walk by the light of faith in God. The second verse warns those who turn from faith to produce their own light to see by. The result is reminiscent of the sorcerers and magicians that lead Babylon before her fall. Babylon was burned up in the false light. Her sorcerers and magicians became the fuel of their own fire.

Each of our two verses contains a triplet, three lines with two versets each. Notice the contrast between the first three lines and the second three lines.

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| <sup>10</sup> Who is among you that fears the LORD,<br>That walks in darkness<br>Let him trust in the name of the LORD | That obeys the voice of His servant,<br>and has no light?<br>and rely on his God.                                      |
| <sup>11</sup> Behold, all you who kindle a fire,<br>Walk in the light of your fire<br>This you will have from My hand: | Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,<br>And among the brands you have set ablaze.<br>You will lie down in torment. |

The first triplet enjoins us to follow the model of the Servant. Alter sees a connection back to Isaiah 9:2, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light."<sup>3</sup> That verse followed a contrast set up at the end of chapter 8. Isaiah had exhorted his followers to commit themselves to the Word of God, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples...to the law and to the testimony!" That was his call. That word for "disciple" in 8:16 is the same Hebrew word used in this Song describing the Servant's tongue and ear. Disciples are exhorted this way in verse 10.

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| <sup>10</sup> Who is among you that fears the LORD,<br>That walks in darkness<br>Let him trust in the name of the LORD | That obeys the voice of His servant,<br>and has no light?<br>and rely on his God. |
|--|---|

Trust in the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord is the nature of God. It's what's true of God. It's the reality of who God is. Trust in that when you don't see. Rely on your God. The word for "light" here is a poetic word, maybe better translated as, "radiance," - "who walks in darkness and has no radiance." You may not have radiant light shining from the tabernacle to guide you. You might not be in the new Zion, where God dwells as a radiant light with His people. But you believe in that radiance. You know He is the light. So, fear Yahweh. Respect Him. Live in awe of Him. Obey the voice of His Servant.

The faithful disciples of Isaiah described back in chapter 8 were set in contrast to the majority of Israel, a people described as "walking in deep darkness." They looked up to curse God for their suffering and looking back down at the Earth to see only distress, darkness, and the gloom of anguish. God speaks to them in verse 11.

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| <sup>11</sup> Behold, all you who kindle a fire,<br>Walk in the light of your fire<br>This you will have from My hand: | Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,<br>And among the brands you have set ablaze.<br>You will lie down in torment. |
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<sup>3</sup> Alter 1949.

If you will not respond to the Word of God and His Servant, if you will not fear the Lord of the disciple, if you will not fear the Lord and walk by faith, then light your own fire. Make your own light to see by. It will not end well for you. At the end, you will lie down in torment. You will become fuel for the flames.

### **Israel and the Song: Zion called to Respond (51:1-52:12)**

The section connecting Israel to the Song is much longer than the Lord's comment on the Song. This section takes up 35 verses starting at 51:1. The overall theme of the passage is a call to Israel. The initial oracles exhort Zion to listen. "Open your ears like the servant and listen to what your God has done on your behalf. Then act like the Servant in obedience and faith." These oracles speak to the Israelites positively, assuming a right desire to pursue relationship with God. That's a shift. Though the message is for all Israel, the words apply more to a faithful remnant among the Israelites. It's like we are speaking to a group of disciples.

The ending oracles increase the intensity of the call, shifting from, "Listen!" to, "Wake up!" The tone continues to treat the audience positively. But at the same time, we realize there is a problem. They will be able to walk with God in restored relationship only if they can wake up to what God has done for them.

We will end the passage not being completely sure of what God has done for Israel. He has set them free from bondage. But being set free is not enough. It was not enough in Egypt. Before being set free, the faithful among Israel sacrificed a lamb and spread its blood over the frame of their door. Israel was not excluded from the wrath of God. In that last plague they deserved that, too. But wrath was satisfied by faith through the blood of the lamb. The angel of wrath passed over those houses. They were declared clean.

In the third Servant Song we recognized the Servant's complete confidence in His position with God. "Who will bring a charge against me?" But how can that be true of these Israelites whose forefathers were sent to Babylon for their sin? How can even these who listen, who actually wake from their slumber and depart from captivity with the Lord, how can they be confident God will not burn them up along the way? Because, they're going to sin again. What Passover lamb covers that sin? That question will not be answered here. We have one more Servant Song to go.

The emphasis here is the call for a response to the grace of God. God has set you free. Get up and go. I am not going to take time to go into the details of this passage. It's a long passage. We will move quickly. Recognizing the structure will help us to do that.

Motyer structures this section as a combination of eight oracles. The first three oracles all begin with a call for Israel to listen and a double description of the hearers. Those first three oracles are balanced structurally by the last three oracles. Each of the last three oracles begins with a double imperative like, "Awake, awake," or, "Depart, depart." That leaves two oracles in the middle of the section. The first is a bold command, calling on God to awake. Not just God but "the arm of the Lord." The second provides a message of reassurance.<sup>4</sup> I'll read the oracles one by one, making some comments as we go.

*Oracle 1: Listen to me – you who pursue righteousness, who seek the Lord.*

So, the first three oracles start with a call to listen and double description of the audience. The first is in 51:1-3.

<sup>1</sup> "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,                      Who seek the LORD:

[That's what I mean by double description, first, "you who pursue righteousness" and second, "who seek the Lord." So they're described twice.]

<sup>1</sup> "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,                      Who seek the LORD:  
    Look to the rock from which you were hewn                      And to the quarry from which you were dug.

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<sup>4</sup> Motyer 402.

- <sup>2</sup> “Look to Abraham your father  
When he was but one I called him,  
<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion;  
And her wilderness He will make like Eden,  
Joy and gladness will be found in her,  
And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;  
Then I blessed him and multiplied him.”  
He will comfort all her waste places.  
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;  
Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.

The double description is positive. Isaiah speaks to those who seek the Lord and pursue righteousness. He exhorts them to remember the past as a motivation for trusting God in the future. They are to consider their origins. He uses the term, “rock,” which Moses liked to use in terms of God; He is our rock. Isaiah is using it to consider their origins in Abraham and Sarah, examples of believers who trusted in God, even though they experienced much later the fulfillment of God’s promise. And they didn’t even experience the full fulfillment of God’s promise in their lifetime. Just as Abraham and Sarah were comforted, “the Lord will comfort Zion.” Isaiah then reaches further back in time to the garden of Eden as a picture of the salvation that lies in Israel’s future. And the exhortation was, “Listen to this, you who seek the Lord.” Isaiah, by saying these things, is modeling himself after the Servant. The Servant speaks words to the weary to sustain them. Isaiah is speaking words to the weary to sustain them. “Listen to this, you who seek the Lord.”

*Oracle 2: Pay attention to me – O my people, O my nation.*

The next call to listen comes in 51:4-6. This call also includes a double description of the audience. They are called, “my people,” and, “my nation.”

- <sup>4</sup> “Pay attention to Me, O My people,  
For a law will go forth from Me,  
<sup>5</sup> “My righteousness is near,  
And My arms will judge the peoples;  
The coastlands will wait for Me,  
And for My arm they will wait expectantly.  
<sup>6</sup> “Lift up your eyes to the sky,  
For the sky will vanish like smoke,  
And its inhabitants will die in like manner;  
But My salvation will be forever,  
And My righteousness will not wane.  
And give ear to Me, O My nation;  
And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples.  
My salvation has gone forth,  
Then look to the earth beneath;  
And the earth will wear out like a garment  
And My righteousness will not wane.

Israel is to absorb as true this promise that teaching will go from God to all nations. His justice will be set as a light for peoples. This is not just about the restoration of Israel. This is about salvation granted to all peoples. The beginning of verse 5 and the end of verse 6 create a chiasmic envelope with the four words, righteousness – salvation; salvation - righteousness. The pairing of righteousness and salvation is standard in Isaiah. God’s righteousness is not only about His character, a virtue. It is also about the action that flows from that character. The promise here is that God’s righteous action results not only in just wrath, but also in merciful salvation.

Verse 6 enjoins us to consider all of creation, the sky above, and Earth beneath, possibly taking us further back in time even before Eden, to the very first days. But then we are immediately taken further forward in time to the vanishing of the sky and the wearing out of the Earth. Like smoke vanishes and a garments wear out, the creation is transient. But God’s righteousness and His salvation are forever. Faithful disciples are to remember this as they go through present struggles. Isaiah speaks words to the weary to sustain them, saying, “Pay attention to this, all God’s people.”

*Oracle 3: Listen to me – you who know righteousness, a people in whose heart is my law.*

The third call to listen comes in verses 7 and 8 with the double description of the audience as, “you who know righteousness,” and, “a people in whose heart is my law.”

- <sup>7</sup> “Listen to Me, you who know righteousness,  
Do not fear the reproach of man,  
<sup>8</sup> “For the moth will eat them like a garment,  
But My righteousness will be forever,  
A people in whose heart is My law;  
Nor be dismayed at their revilings.  
And the grub will eat them like wool.  
And My salvation to all generations.”

The truths of the previous oracle are repeated here with a focus at putting the opposition of men in perspective. Just as the Earth wears out, so also the enemies of God’s people wear out. The image is one of garments decaying, but mention of moths and grubs eating the garments invokes human remains decaying in a grave. The moths and grubs will eat them. The enemies of God are transient, “but [His] righteousness will be forever, and [His] salvation to all generations.” Poetically, this connects us to the last line of the Servant’s Song. This is how He saw those who would contend with Him. “Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them.” And so, we are to model ourselves after the Servant. We are to understand the transience human evil and human opposition, and put our trust in God, knowing His righteousness is forever. Isaiah says, “Listen to this, you who know righteousness.”

*Oracle 4: A call on the arm of the Lord to awake.*

That brings us to the central two oracles, the first of which switches the audience around. Instead of God speaking to a faithful remnant of those who pursue Him, this is the faithful remnant calling on the Lord to do what He has promised to do. It sounds similar to a psalm of lament, crying to God for rescue while also trusting in faith that God will, indeed, save. This is verses 9-11.

<p><sup>9</sup> Awake, awake, put on strength,          Awake as in the days of old,          Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces,</p> <p><sup>10</sup> Was it not You who dried up the sea,          Who made the depths of the sea a pathway</p> <p><sup>11</sup> So the ransomed of the LORD will return          And everlasting joy will be on their heads.</p>	<p>O arm of the LORD;          the generations of long ago.          Who pierced the dragon?          The waters of the great deep;          For the redeemed to cross over?          And come with joyful shouting to Zion,          They will obtain gladness and joy,          And sorrow and sighing will flee away.</p>
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Isaiah creates a powerful poetic effect by combining images from Canaanite mythology and the Exodus story. Even though he uses terms from Canaanite mythology, we know he is really referring to the Exodus. We also know that he is using the past Exodus from Egypt to point ahead to a second Exodus from Babylon. So there are some layers here. Rahab and the dragon can refer to the Canaanite myth, but Rahab is also a reference to Egypt, and the dragon works as a reference to Pharaoh. Similarly, “the sea” and “the great deep” work as references to the Canaanite god of death, Yam, and the primordial abyss of chaos, while also referring to the Red Sea: the redeemed cross over. The mythology heightens our sense of the incredible strength of the arm of the Lord as He defeats evil and overcomes chaos. It takes this incredible historical moment of Exodus, of the defeat of the superpower Egypt, and it heightens that to the supernatural struggle where God overcomes chaos.

I realize that someone might still feel uncomfortable with Isaiah’s use of mythology to create poetic effect. We know Isaiah does not believe in false gods or pagan myths. He has left no doubt about that with his frequent polemics denying the reality of pagan gods, describing their idol images as mere blocks of wood. We could still question the wisdom of using myth. Should Isaiah use this in his prophecy? Might that lead a reader to be confused regarding the truthfulness of what Isaiah is saying? Does he really believe in Canaanite mythology? But if he does, then does he really believe in the Exodus?

I think that would be a good point if Isaiah regularly interwove cultural myth and ideas into his narrative and into his poetry. But this is a great case of the exception proving the rule. As far as I know, Isaiah only refers to myth this way three times: twice here in 52:9 and 10, and in his reference to Leviathan in 27:1. That’s three out of 1300 verses, or 0.2%. On top of that, Isaiah writes in a long tradition of historical narrative, not mythological epic. We know he is not writing myth. Israel has been recording historical narrative for at least 800 years, back to Moses and the Pentateuch. And for Isaiah, he begins Isaiah 1:1 by placing the whole prophecy into its historical context in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. And then throughout we have references to nations and kings that line up with the historical perspective. This is absolutely not mythological poetry.





<sup>16</sup> “I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand,

We have already noted that a primary task of the Servant is to speak the words of God to God’s people. He will do so with a skillful tongue. And like the arrow hidden in the quiver, He is here covered with the shadow of God’s hand. He is reserved for a special purpose, hidden for the day of revelation. What will this Servant be sent to do?

To establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’ ”

That’s an incredible mandate. Even though God has already stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the Earth, this Servant will establish the heaven anew. He will found the Earth anew. Who does that? Only God does that. How can this be a role of the Servant? How does the Servant establish a new heaven and new Earth and say definitively to Zion, “You are my people.” We can only say we do not know. Is this hyperbole? What is this? As in the earlier Servant Songs, where we are told the Servant is Isaiah, the Servant is the Covenant, the nature of this servant, who often seems very human, also regularly expands to include that which seems beyond human.

*Oracle 6: Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself!*

The last three oracles amplify the call to God’s people. They need wake up, so they can listen. Each oracle begins with a double imperative. The first oracle is in 17-23.

<sup>17</sup> Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem,  
You who have drunk from the LORD’s hand the cup of His anger;  
The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.  
<sup>18</sup> There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne,  
Nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.

Notice the image here is the attempt to arouse a drunken woman. Jerusalem has been made drunk by the wrath of God.

<sup>17</sup> Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem,  
You who have drunk from the LORD’s hand the cup of His anger;  
The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.  
<sup>18</sup> There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne,  
Nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.  
<sup>19</sup> These two things have befallen you; Who will mourn for you?  
The devastation and destruction, famine and sword; How shall I comfort you?  
<sup>20</sup> Your sons have fainted, they lie helpless at Like an antelope in a net,  
the head of every street,  
Full of the wrath of the LORD, The rebuke of your God.  
<sup>21</sup> Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted, Who are drunk, but not with wine:  
<sup>22</sup> Thus says your Lord, the LORD, even your God who contends for His people,  
“Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling,  
The chalice of My anger;  
You will never drink it again. <sup>23</sup> “I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,  
Who have said to you, ‘Lie down that we may You have even made your back like the ground  
walk over you.’”

And like the street for those who walk over it.”

Jerusalem has drunk the wrath of God’s hand. She has drunk the full cup. It is a cup of reeling. As the drunken woman totters around, disoriented and purposeless, so also the people of Israel reel from the disorientation caused by defeat, and suffering, and deportation, and exile. Their sons have fainted. They lie on every street. It’s like the whole city is drunken. And there is none to guide her. None to take her by the hand. They all fainted and lie helpless full of God’s wrath and rebuke. But then in verse 22, the Lord takes the cup out of Jerusalem’s hand. The description of the cup is the same as in the first verse of the passage. God has taken from her hand the cup of reeling, the chalice of anger.



<sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared His holy arm  
That all the ends of the earth may see  
In the sight of all the nations,  
The salvation of our God.

*Oracle 8: Depart! Depart!*

The final oracle is in 52:10-11. It also begins with a double imperative.

<sup>11</sup> Depart, depart, go out from there,  
This is, "Go out from the City of Man!"

<sup>11</sup> Depart, depart, go out from there,  
Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves,  
Touch nothing unclean;  
You who carry the vessels of the LORD.

<sup>12</sup> But you will not go out in haste,  
For the LORD will go before you,  
Nor will you go as fugitives;  
And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Israel has been set free from exile in Babylon. How will they respond to that freedom? Do they sit where they are as though still enslaved? Do they make their home in the City of Man? "Depart, depart, go out from there." Do we do that? We have been spiritually free from exile. Do we still act enslaved? Yes, we live in human culture but do we make our home in the City of Man? "Depart, depart, go out from there." God has ended the period of His wrath and has removed the bondage of the oppressor. The right human response is to get up and go. Not only to get up and go: also to embrace the promise of restoration. Wrath is removed and restoration provided for. And if we are restored to relationship with God, should we not live in that relationship? "Touch nothing unclean." As you go out, "purify yourselves" for you are those "who carry the vessels of the Lord." You are a priesthood.

And when you go out, do not go in haste. You are not sinners trying to escape the wrath of God. You are not prisoners in the dungeon of an oppressor. You have been set free by the hand of God. You do not need to go in haste. You do need to go with faith, determination, and resolve. Let the Lord's Servant be your model. You are not at the end of the journey. You are just beginning. Going out with God will require you to live by the light of faith.

As you walk in faith, be sure of this, "The LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard." God leads and God protects your back. He prepares you for what lies ahead, and He stands with you when it gets hard.

"How lovely are the feet of him who declares good news!" These oracles announce the end of God's wrath, the restoration of God's people, the freedom to journey home with God. The middle oracle called for the arm of the Lord to provide salvation. The Lord will provide it. How does the Lord provide it? How is wrath removed? What is the arm of salvation going to do? How are our sins washed away? How do we live with God as a holy priesthood?

Look to our fourth and final Servant Song that begins, "Behold, my servant..."<sup>5</sup> We will address the "how" in that song in our next lesson.

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<sup>5</sup> Motyer 402.