

My Accusers Will All Lie Down in Torment**Isaiah 50:1-11 (8-11)****Facilitators: Louise P. McQueen****I. Historical Background & Biblical Context****A. Historical Background**

This part of Isaiah is the book of comfort addressed to the Jews in exile in Babylon, a period of darkness, suffering and oppression. In their exile and waiting, the Jews were susceptible to despair and doubt. Had God forgotten them? God's response to them was a firm and emphatic "No". Waiting is hard. Being faithful while waiting is hard. Waiting faithfully for a long time when we are experiencing suffering, trials, opposition or attacks is even harder. When the promise seems faint and far away, how can we wait faithfully?

B. Biblical Context

In this chapter, the LORD spoke to Israel and refuted their accusations with rhetorical questions. The two images that were used are that of divorce and also debt or slavery. Deuteronomy 24:1 mentions the conditions for divorce. Slavery was also a part of their economic structure, when one was unable to repay or owed someone.

II. The Lesson: "My Accusers Will Lie Down in Torment"**1. vv. 1-3.** The LORD spoke to a doubting Israel.

God asked Israel if He has divorced her or sent her into Slavery. Thus, we can infer that Israel's accusation of God is that He has divorced her and sent her away permanently, despising their marriage covenant. Secondly, they accused God of selling them into slavery as if He is unable or inadequate to provide for them. The answer to both these silent accusations is a 'NO'. Israel's separation and exile was not final; God is not indebted to another but still had authority over them. In Isaiah 50:2 another accusation was that

God was impotent (powerless, helpless) and unable to save them. God pointed out that it was not because of a lack of power that they were still in exile. By His word alone, He commands the waters and the sky. The images of the sea and the rivers evoked memories of the Exodus, where He split the Red Sea and turned the Nile to blood and the sky dark.

God continued to answer His people accusations in Isaiah 50:2: “If you now accused me of abandoning you, why is it that when I sent people to you, none of you heeded my call to repentance”? God had promised that if they were to seek Him and turn to Him, He would deliver them (Deut. 4:29-31). Even though He sent prophets, they did not repent or turn to Him. God effectively said, “You have not been brought back from exile, not because I have gone back on my word or promises or because I am unable to bring you back. Rather, it is because you did not repent of your sins”.

2. vv. 4-9. Who is the LORD’s Servant?

In these verses, we hear the voice of the LORD’S Servant. Who is the Servant? The Servant explained that the LORD God has given Him the ability to speak wisely, to speak a word in season to him who is weary. It was the Jews in exile who were weary of waiting. God sent His Servant to comfort His weary people, to sustain them, uphold them, bear them up, give them strength to persevere. God awakens the Servant’s ear and also gives Him the tongue to speak. His speech is effective and can sustain the weary. The Servant’s task is to bring salvation to God’s people, to deliver them from darkness. In obeying God’s word, the Servant suffered opposition and humiliation from His opponents (Is. 50:5-6). They will hit Him (strike), they will shame Him (“pull out His beard”, “disgrace and spitting”), but the Servant will not shy away from them and will bear the humiliation. In the midst of all this suffering, humiliation and pain, the Messiah has an unshakable faith in the help of the LORD.

You who are weary, are you sustained by God’s word? God’s chosen Servant says to you, “Come to me all ye who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28-30). Some of us may say, “But when

I struggle, I pray, and I still feel discouraged” just as the Jews felt in exile. (Why is that?).

Here are some questions for reflection. How familiar are you with what the Bible tells you about the depth of your sin, about the sovereignty, wisdom, holiness and power of God? How familiar are you with the promises that He has made to His people and of the promises He has been faithful to and has fulfilled or kept? How familiar are you with the hope that you have if you are in Christ Jesus? And how familiar are you with the promises that will fully come true on the day of Christ’s return? Are you being nourished and fed with the Word? Are you engaged in regular or daily spiritual discipline, reading the Word and mediating on it? Are you regularly sitting under good and faithful teaching in your church or in your small group Sunday Morning Bible study? Like the Jews in exile, Christians cannot just be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word as well. The Word will guide us in our daily walk with the LORD.

In Isaiah 7-9, the reason for the Servant’s confidence is because the LORD God helps, and He is near (Mk. 6:48). The Servant is put on trial, charged with a crime He did not commit because of our sins. He is confident that He has not been disgraced, will not be put to shame, will not be declared guilty and that He will be vindicated, cleared of blame, guilt, justified. As a result, the Servant is described as steadfast and determined (“I have set my face like a flint”), and His tone in addressing His opponents is bold and confident because He is rooted in His confidence in God’s helping presence. He could see the cross on the horizon but still “set His face like a flint”. God’s presence is ever with Him, and because He is sinless, who can declare Him guilty? This was Christ’s way of anticipating the truth of Romans 8:31: “If God is for us, who can be against us”?

Jesus endured shame, scorn and humiliation on the cross and even rejection and abandonment from His disciples. Yet, He was faithful to His mission and steadfast to the very end. This is our Savior; this is our God! The end outcome of those who oppose the Servant is

that they will “wear out like a garment, the moth will eat them up. They will not last.

3. vv. 10-11. Two Groups with Opposing Views

Christ speaks to two groups of people that are alluded to in Verses 10-11. The first group is those who fear the LORD, who obey the voice of His Servant who does not walk in darkness. They trust in the name and character of the LORD and rely on Him and will not be put to shame. The second group kindles a fire and equips themselves with burning torches. They rely on their own fire and light, and their ultimate end is that they will be cursed to torment. Their destiny is the same as those in Isaiah 50:9. God speaks throughout Scripture to our various needs. If we do not know from God’s Word how reliable He is, then we will not rely on Him but on our own feeble strength.

Christians have a clear warning in this lesson about two ways to live. They can choose, despite being in darkness and seeing no way out, to trust in the name, character of the LORD, trust in whom He is, whom He is like and obey His voice. They will not be put to shame. Or they can choose to be self-sufficient, rely on their own efforts and see where that will take them. Men who have their own schemes, gods and plans and rejected God’s word will face terrible punishment. That will lead to torment.

III. Conclusion

When we face difficult times, we may be tempted to think that God is not there for us. Rather, God tells us that He disciplines those He loves; it is not punishment but discipline.