

Revelation and Response

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[0:00] Turn with me please to the passage that we read in Isaiah chapter 50. Isaiah chapter 50. And reading again verses 10 and 11. Isaiah 50 and reading again verses 10 and 11.

Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

Behold all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches. Walk by the light of your fire and by the torches that you have kindled. This you have from my hand. You shall lie down in torment.

The message of Isaiah is a message of hope. It's a message of salvation. It's a message of the triumph of God's grace as God rescues and reclaims and renews and restores and reconciles his people from the ruins and rubble and rubbish of sin through his appointed servant, his appointed saviour, his appointed Messiah. And today I want to focus on this servant song that we find in Isaiah 50 verses 4 to 11. And we're going to be focusing on the revelation of the servant or revelation of the saviour in verses 4 to 9. And then the response to the saviour, the response to the servant in verses 10 and 11. First we have the revelation. That's in verses 4 to 9.

And in these verses we see the revelation of the saviour that God has provided. The revelation of the saviour God has provided. And the first thing we might note is the servant's focus. In verses 4, 5, 7 and 9, the servant speaks about the Lord God. This title, Lord God, refers to God's absolute and unparalleled sovereignty. The God who creates and rules and upholds all things is on the mind of the servant.

[2:02] The God who is committed to his wayward people and committed to their well-being is on the mind of the servant. The servant's focus is on the covenant-keeping God of the cosmos. The servant lives with this constant unwavering God consciousness. And in verse 4, we read about the servant's proclamation. The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning, he awakens. He awakens my ear to teach us those who are taught. The servant claims that he receives words from God. He has the tongue of those who are taught. Or more literally, he has the disciple's tongue. The God who spoke the cosmos into being.

The God who controls the seas. The God who fearfully and wonderfully created every creature. Equips the servant and gives him the words to speak. And we're told that God awakens the servant morning by morning every day to give a fresh word to him. And the servant goes on to deliver this word from God. Now in Isaiah 49, the servant speaks God's word with the cutting edge of a sharp sword.

The cutting edge of a polished arrow. But here he speaks God's gentle, consoling, encouraging word to sustain the weak and the weary. This is the God who gives power and gives strength to the faint.

This is the God who won't break a bruised reed. Won't quench a smouldering wick. This is the God who has a concern for the broken and the breaking. And this word is sufficient to save them and sustain them and encourage them. And now this servant who is preoccupied with God and listens to God delivers a grace-driven, grace-saturated message from God. And then in verses 5 and 6, we read about the servant's suffering. The Lord God has opened my ear and I was not rebellious. I turned not backwards. I gave my back to those who strike on my cheeks, to those who pull out the beard. I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. Verse 5, you see, describes the obedience of the servant. And it's built on Exodus 21.

You remember Exodus 21. We're told that if a servant couldn't bear to be separated from his master, then the master would drive a nail through the servant's ear. He would open a hole in the servant's ear. The servant was now seen as one who had committed himself to his master for life. And now in Isaiah 50, this servant claims that he is totally committed to God and God has opened his ear. God has placed a hole in his ear. And he says that he's never been rebellious to God's will. He's never turned his back on the command of God, the plan of God. Now that's amazing, isn't it? When we consider every other servant of God, when we consider Abraham or Jacob or Isaac or Moses or David or Jonah, we see that they were all given the word of God. They were all spokesmen for God. But what do they do? They don't live by the word.

[5:24] They abandon the word. They abandon God for periods. This servant's different. There has never been a moment in his experience when he rejected the will of God. There has never been a moment in his experience when he rejected the word of God. He's able to say from the bottom of his heart, my food is to do the will of him who sent me. He's able to say from the bottom of his heart, not what I will, but what you will to the living and true God. And in verse 6, we're given this description of the suffering his obedience leads to. He gives his back to those who would beat him as a criminal. He gives his cheeks to those who would delight in degrading and humiliating him. He doesn't hide his face from the disgrace and the spitting and the jeers of the crowds. And we're told he's in total control in all this.

He doesn't somehow fall helplessly into the hands of his enemies. We're told he willingly gives himself, gives himself to those who will do their very worst to him.

Now at first it's hard for us to understand what all this means. This servant's mission was described in Isaiah 42 and 49. And we're told that he would save his people.

And we're told he would restore God's creation. And now the servant is suffering in this shameful and intense way. What do we do with this?

But Isaiah 52 and 53 will make clear that he's been wounded for his people's transgressions. He's been crushed for his people's iniquities.

[7:10] His chastisement is bringing his people peace. And by his wounds, his people are healed. You have to read this passage in the light of what comes next.

See his suffering as purposeful. That's what he's doing. His suffering will result in blessing. And blessing for the nations. Because it's a sacrificial suffering.

He's offering himself up to God for the blessing, for the welfare of his rebellious people. And finally verses 7 down to 9 describe the servant's vindication.

But the Lord God helps me. Therefore I have not been disgraced. Therefore I have set my face like a flint. I know that I shall not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold the Lord God helps me. Who will declare me guilty? Behold all of them will wear out like a garment.

[8:13] The moth will eat them up. The servant knows that God helps him. Look at verse 7. But the Lord God helps me.

Look at verse 8. He who vindicates me. He who justifies me. He who declares me righteous is near. Look at verse 9. Behold the Lord God helps me.

And because God helps him, the servant is able to say, I have not been disgraced or put to shame. Because God helps him, the servant is able to say, I set my face like flint to go to the place of suffering.

Because God helps him, the servant is able to say, who will contend with me? Who is my adversary? Who will declare me guilty? If God has said you're completely innocent, if God has said you're entirely righteous, then no accusation against him will stand the test of time.

Because God helps him, the servant is able to say, my enemies, great though they may seem, will wear out like a moth-eaten garment before me.

[9:22] The servant knows. The servant knows. The servant is confident that God will vindicate him. And his enemies, death itself, will not have the last word on him.

God, the living God, the God who helps him, will have the last word. God will vindicate him. So as we focus on the proclamation of the servant, and the suffering of the servant, and the vindication of the servant, we're being given this revelation, this prophetic vision, of the Savior God has provided for his people.

And today, friends, we can rejoice, knowing that these verses, this prophetic vision, is pointing us to none other than Jesus. You see, Jesus is the one who proclaimed the word of God.

As we read the gospels, we see him speaking with power, with authority, with grace. He speaks as one who had come, from the presence of God, with the word of God, and now he sees into, and speaks into the souls, of the people of God.

And he could do this, because he heard the word of God, morning by morning. Isn't that amazing? Jesus didn't suddenly appear, on the scene of time, at the age of 30, with his great ability to preach.

[10:49] For 30 years, he awakened, in the presence of his father, and waited on him. And for 25 years, Jesus had been memorizing, the Old Testament, and had been applying it, applying passages like this, to his own life, his own walk, his own standing, before his heavenly father.

He had been totally absorbed, in the word of God. And he grew, in wisdom, and stature, before God. That's why he could sustain, the weary, with a word.

And he can still sustain, the weary with a word. When everything fails us, when everything confuses us, when we find ourselves, wearied, and heavy laden, this is the Savior, who can speak, a soul strengthening word, to his people.

The Savior who says, come to me, and I will give you rest. He's the wonderful counselor, who doesn't moralize, at his weary people, but nourishes them, and refreshes them, and tenderly binds them up, with his word of grace.

Never moralizing, but constantly, building them up. But Jesus is also the one, who suffered, in obedience to God.

[12:14] He was committed to God, and committed to saving his people. And he freely chose, the way of suffering. He freely chose, the cowl that he rode.

He gave his back, to those who would beat him. Gave his cheeks, to those who would strike him, and pull out his beard. Walked into the jeers.

Walked into the opposition. Walked into the hostility, with his eyes wide open. There was nowhere he wouldn't go. There was no place, he wouldn't enter.

There was nothing, he wouldn't do, in order to save, his people. He humbled himself, willingly to death. And he humbled himself, more willingly to death, than sinners are willing, to receive him for life.

Isn't that incredible? That the son of God, Jesus, was more willing, to go to death, for his people, than people are willing, to receive him for life.

[13:20] It's a shocking, indictment on people. But that is how far, the son of God, would go. And we know, from Isaiah 52 and 53, that he suffered, as the supreme sacrifice, to deal with the gulf, that our sin, has created, between us, and God.

But you know, what Isaiah 50 shows, is that he knows, what it is, to suffer. He knows, what it is, to suffer. Jesus became a victim, so that there would never be, a victim able to say to him, you don't understand me.

You don't understand, what I'm going through. There's a story told, it's called, The Long Silence. And it goes like this, at the end of time, billions of people, were seated on a great plane, before God's throne.

And most shrunk back, from the brilliant light, before them. But some groups, near the front, talked heatedly, not cringing, but with belligerence. Can God judge us, they said.

How can he know, about suffering, snapped a pert young brunette. She ripped open a sleeve, to reveal a tattooed number, from a Nazi concentration camp. We endure torture, beatings, death.

[14:41] In another group, an African American boy, lowered his collar. What about this, he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. Lynched for no crime, but being black. In another crowd, there was a pregnant school girl, with sullen eyes.

Why should I suffer, she murmured. It wasn't my fault. And far out, across the plain, were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint, against God, for the evil and suffering, he'd permitted in his world.

How lucky God was, to live in heaven, where all was sweetness and light, where there was no weeping, no fear, no hunger, no hatred. What did God know, of all that man, had been forced to endure, in this world?

For God leads a pretty, sheltered life, they said. And so each of these groups, sent forth a leader, chosen because, they'd suffered the most. And in the center, of the vast plain, they consulted, with each other.

At last, they were ready, to present their case. And it was rather clever. Before God, could be qualified, to be their judge, he must endure, what they endured. The decision was, that God would be sentenced, to live on earth, as a man.

[15:46] And let him be born a Jew. And let the legitimacy, of his birth be doubted. And give him a work, so difficult, that even his family, would think him, out of his mind. Let him be betrayed, by his closest friends.

Let him face false charges, be tried, by a prejudiced jury, convicted, by a cowardly judge. Let him be tortured. At the last, let him see, what it means, to be terribly alone.

And then let him die, so there can be, no doubt, that he died. And let there be, a great host of witnesses, to verify it. And as each leader, announced his portion, of the sentence, loud murmurs, of approval, went up, from the throng, of the people assembled.

When the last, had finished, pronouncing sentence, there was a long silence. No one uttered a word, and no one moved.

For suddenly, all knew, that God, had already suffered, his sentence. You can go to Jesus, today friend, knowing he knows.

[16:49] You can go to him, today, knowing he understands. You can go to him, knowing he cares. And he knows, and he understands, and he cares, not because he's read about it, in a book.

Not because he's watched it, from afar. But because, he's been there. And finally, we see that Jesus, is the one, who's been vindicated, by God.

He knew God, would never let him go. And there were those times, when he was especially, conscious of this. Times when his father, opened the windows, of heaven, and declared publicly, this is my son, this is the one I love.

Listen to him. But even in the darkest times, even as he hangs on the cross, crying, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He does so, still able to cry, my God.

He's still able to cry that. And he's now been vindicated, in his resurrection, which declares him, to be the beloved son of God. And he now has this dazzling, immortal, forever scarred, but forever alive body, that will never, suffer again.

[18:00] This is the Jesus, who is able to say, who can bring any charge, against me? Knowing there is no charge, that will stand against him. The religious leaders, could find no accusation, that would stick.

The Roman governor, could find no basis, to crucify him. The centurion, watching him at the cross, said, surely, this is a righteous, innocent man, and the resurrection, is God's declaration, over his son, well done, good, and faithful servant.

That's the resurrection's, declaration. And anyone, who is in Christ, anyone, who is united, by faith, to this Jesus, can also say, who can bring any charge, against me?

Jesus' victory, is our victory. His riches, are our riches. His resources, are our resources. His power, is our power.

His position, is our position. His resurrection, is our resurrection. His righteousness, is our righteousness. His vindication, is our vindication.

[19:09] Where Jesus is, we are. What Jesus has, we have. His story, is our story. There is no condemnation, in and through, Jesus.

And so, no matter what people, say to you, no matter what people, say about you, there is no, condemnation, in, Christ. That's the Savior, God has provided.

That's the Savior, God has provided, for every single, one of his people. And all we can do, is worship him. All we can do, is make much of him. The one who proclaims, the word of God.

The one who suffered, in obedience, to God. And the one, who has been vindicated, by God. The revelation, of the Savior, God's provided.

But this brings us, second, to the response, in verses 10 and 11. And we see here, the response, to the Savior, God's provided.

[20:15] Remember where we've been, what we focused on. We focused on, the proclamation, of the servant, verse 4, the suffering, of the servant, verses 5 and 6, and the vindication, of the servant, in verses 7 to 9.

And now there's a call, to respond to the servant, in verse 10. Who among you, fears the Lord, and obeys the voice, of his servant? This verse contains, a call to fear the Lord, a call to worship God, a call to treat God, with reverence, and rejoice, in his presence.

But you also see, that this is a call, to obey the voice, of the servant, who proclaims, the word of God, and suffers, in obedience to God, and has been vindicated, by God.

Quite simply, no one can fear God, without obeying, the voice of the servant. The way one regards, the servant, is an indicator, into how they regard God.

And today we might say, no one can truly, be one of God's people, unless they've engaged, with Jesus. Unless they've responded, to the voice of Jesus.

[21 : 26] You see, Jesus says, come to me. He says, believe in me. He says, love me. He says, listen to me. He says, abide in me. He says, follow me. And no matter, how much a person, may go to church, no matter, how well, they can sing the Psalms, no matter, how much, they may claim, that they believe, in God.

If, they have not, obeyed, the voice, of the servant. If, they have ignored, the invitation, and command, of Jesus, they're still, outside of God's people.

that's how central Jesus is. That is how important it is, friend, that you and I, do business, with Jesus. There is no other way, no other truth, no other life, but in Christ.

And the remainder of verse 10, gives a word for the person, who is fearing God, and obeying the voice, of his servant. Let him, who walks in darkness, and has no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and rely, on his God.

Darkness, here, refers to a difficult season. Distress. A time of heart, wrenching trouble. And sometimes, the person, who's obeyed the voice, of Jesus, will have to walk, without a glimmer, of light around them.

[22 : 50] Sometimes, the person, who's obeyed the voice, of Jesus, will go through, a season of perplexity, and it seems, there's no way out. Sometimes, the person, who's obeyed the voice, of Jesus, won't be aware, of the warmth, of God's presence, or smile.

There are seasons, when nothing, in our experience, makes sense. Seasons, when there seems, to be no path forward. It's seasons, when everything, seems to be closing, around us.

Seasons, when the darkness, does seem to be, that only, ever present friend. There are those seasons, Charles Spurgeon writes, where the believer, asks, where am I?

And how did I come here? If I'm a child of God, why am I thus? Did I really repent, and obtain light, so as to escape, the darkness of sin? If so, why am I so conscious, of this thick gloom?

Did I really join Christ, and think I received atonement? Why then, has the son of my joy, gone down so hopelessly? Where are the loving kindnesses, of God? And Spurgeon says, the good man, begins to question himself, as to every point, of his profession.

[24 : 02] For in the dark, he cannot even judge, his own self. What is worse, he doubts, the very ground, on which his feet, are resting. There are those seasons, when darkness is near.

What does a believer, do in such seasons? Well Isaiah says, as a believer trusts, in the name of the Lord, and rests on his God. It's when we're brought, to the place of, simply clinging to God, and his promises, of past, and future grace.

It's when we're, brought to the point, of recognizing, God never said, we'd never be confused, or distraught, but he did say, he would never leave, or forsake us.

It's when we're brought, to the place, of holding on to God, as he is revealed, in his written word, and in his incarnate word. It's when we're brought, to the point, of remembering, we have a savior, who's walked, in the darkness, without the light, trusting only, in the name of the Lord, and relying, on his God.

You see friends, Jesus was the one, able to say, the words of verse 10, in Matthew, and Mark's gospel, as he hung, in the darkness, darkness, and all, who follow, in his footsteps, will experience, similar seasons.

[25 : 24] And the world, and the flesh, and the devil, may say, don't trust the Lord. He can't be trusted. In fact, he's not even there, to be trusted.

And Isaiah, simply says, and God says, through Isaiah, trust, in the name, of the Lord. And rely on the God, who's provided, everything necessary.

This glorious savior, this glorious servant, this glorious Jesus, for your salvation, and your eternal joy. And finally, verse 11, gives a warning, to the person, who is refusing, to fear God, and obey the voice, of the servant.

Behold all you, who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves, with burning torches. Walk by the light, of your fire, and by the torches, you have kindled. This you have, from my hand, you shall lie down, in torment.

See, this group, have also been affected, by the darkness, and the misery, and the distress, but they think, they don't need, to wait on the Lord. They don't need, to rely on God.

[26 : 35] They think, they have no need, of the servant, who calls himself, the light of the nations. They think, they have no need, of the God, whose glory, and holiness, is so bright, that the seraphim, hide their faces, from him.

They want to remedy, the situation themselves. They have their own ideas, to live by. They have their own fires, and torches to light. Why rely on God?

Why rely on his servant? Surely, there are other, plausible, and easier, ways to live. And Isaiah exclaims, will walk, by the light, of your fire, and walk, by the torches, you've kindled.

Go on, and live that way, and see, where it takes you. Because, Proverbs 16, tells us, there is a way, that seems right, to a man, but it sends, the way to death.

And here's Isaiah, saying that those, who reject the Lord, and reject his servant, and reject the salvation, he offers, will lie down, and torment. It will be a punishment, that is delivered, by the hand, of God.

[27 : 43] So as we study, verses 10 and 11, we see the contrasting, responses, to the savior, the servant, the deliverer, God has appointed. And today, these verses remind us, that our response, to the servant, our response, to Jesus, involves, a life, or death choice.

A choice, that will determine, our final, eternal, destiny. You see, we live in a world, where there is difficulty, there is distress, there is stress, there is strain, and everyone, develops their own, coping mechanisms, to try dealing, with this.

And for a while, these coping mechanisms, may appear to be, very successful, and very effective, but what God shows, through Isaiah 50, is that only the servant, only Jesus, can provide the remedy, for our estrangement, from God.

Only the servant, only Jesus, can assure us, that God's promises, are ours, in the challenges, of life, and the dark paths, we must tread.

Only the servant, only Jesus, can guarantee us, a glorious future, where we will feast, at the banqueting table, in the father's house. Only the servant, only Jesus, can give us a hope, that doesn't disappoint.

[29 : 07] Friend, if you build your life, on any other word, any other foundation, you will lie down, in torment. That is God's, ultimate warning, in verse 11.

And so today, God is calling, through his word, trust in the servant, obey the voice, of the servant, come to the one, who was obedient, for his people, the one who died, for his people, the one who rose, for his people, and the one, who will return, for the final vindication, of, his people.

Obey, the voice, of the servant. Amen. Amen.