

"The Lord God has given Me (speaking of Jesus, the Messiah) the tongue of disciples (ESV says "of those who are taught"! ) that I may know how to sustain the weary one with the Word! He awakens Me morning by morning; He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple!" (Isaiah 50:4)

Last week's lesson on Isaiah 49 began a new segment of the book of Isaiah (in chapters 49-55) where Isaiah records how God, having provided physical deliverance for the nation of Israel (by delivering them from Babylonian captivity), would now deal with the more serious problem of sin--by sending a Savior, a Deliverer!

Motyer notes that "the key to this final movement is the contrast between the new beginning afforded to Israel by its deliverance from Babylon, and their unchanging relationship to the Lord, as expressed by the closing line of Isaiah 48--namely, that 'There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord"! And that "this formed the backdrop for the greater deliverance (a spiritual deliverance!) that needed to come about, and that's prophesied to come about, not just for Israel, but for all the nations of the world, through the redeeming work of the Lord (speaking, of course, of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God"! (Interesting that God Himself would declare that "it was too small a thing that His plan of redemption would be limited to restoring the preserved ones of Israel, but that He would make His Son a light to all the nations"!)

In response to Israel's accusation (in Isaiah 49:14) that He had somehow "forgotten" Zion" (during their time of suffering in Babylon), He retorts with a hypothetical question of whether a mother would ever forget her nursing child, and noted that He had actually "inscribed them on the palms of His hand, and that the walls of them were continually before Him"! (What a great reminder for us of His "watch-care" over His own, as well as an affirmation of the "doctrine of the security of the believer"!)

And what a fitting (and timely) reminder this closing lesson for 2023 also gave us of John 3:16, as well as for setting the tone for us to celebrate the beautiful Christmas story which just happened to come during this time!

Isaiah 50 begins with the Lord again taking issue with Israel's charge that He had forgotten them--by asking them, rhetorically, whether He had ever issued a "certificate of divorce" to them, or "sold them to their creditors" for their iniquities--two theoretical events which (if implemented) would have caused an irretrievable breach in their covenantal relationship! No, He answers emphatically, it was because of their own transgressions that their "mother" (Israel) had been "sent away" into captivity, and because of their unbelief that there was no one to answer Him when He called them to repentance"! (Constable notes that "to this day, Israel is still in the period of punishment for their sin, as exemplified by the persecution of the Jews around the world, and by their present worldwide dispersion"!)

And yet, He assures them that they are secure, with two more hypothetical questions in verse 2, the answers to which were obvious: "Is My hand too short that it cannot save? Or have I no power to deliver?" No! His power is great enough, as Isaiah would confirm, not only to rescue the Israelites from captivity, but to provide salvation from sin (and to sustain a covenantal relationship with them that could never be breached (or broken)! And the proof of His power to save, and to "work wonders" among them (as Psalm 77:14 assures!), is demonstrably exemplified by His work of creation, and power over all nature, says verses 2b-3!

Moreover, He says (in verse 4) that "the Lord has given Him the tongue of disciples" (ESV says "of those who are taught"...that I may know how to sustain the weary with the word, and that He awakens Me

morning by morning, and opens My ear that I might listen as a disciple"! According to Archer, this means that He would "speak as one to whom God has taught His true message of comfort for those who are weary of sin"! (Delitzsch writes that "nothing indicates a tongue befitting the disciples of God, so much as the gift of administering consolation"!

Motyer further notes that "the tongue filled with the appropriate word for ministry is the product of the ear filled with the word of God..." and that the "morning by morning appointment is not a special provision or demand related to the perfect Servant but is the standard curriculum for all disciples"!

Wiersbe writes that "everything that Jesus said and did (when He humbled Himself and came into this world as a man) was taught to Him by His Father! Jesus Himself said, in John 8:28, that "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father has taught Me"! (Interestingly, in the same context, He said "to the Jews who believed in Him" (in verse 31 which follows) that "if you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"!)

And in the verses to follow (in Isaiah 50), He further states that "when He (the Father) opened His ear, He was not disobedient" to the call...but gave His back to those who (would) strike Him and His cheek to those who would pluck out His beard...and set His face like a flint...knowing that He who would vindicate Him was near"! Wow! Here clearly anticipating, and speaking prophetic words of what was to come for Him during His first advent! And here, for the first time in the book of Isaiah, picturing Him as the "Suffering Savior," who would face rejection from the world, as He heads to the Cross!

What an example for us of what it means to be a "disciple of Christ"! And of the importance of listening and receiving instruction from the Word of God, and of "setting our faces as a flint too (as He did!), with the same commitment and determination for carrying out the will of God for our lives!

We are challenged in the closing verses of this lesson (as Motyer notes) to "follow the model of the Servant, rather than to walk in the way of self-sufficiency"! And (as Constable writes) to "listen to the Servant, to follow His example, and to experience His salvation"! And, like the Israelites, but more importantly, like the Servant (Jesus), so we too can expect to walk in darkness"--but not the darkness of sin, but in the kind of darkness that involves suffering, and rejection, and misunderstanding, which Constable describes as coming along with the calling to carrying out the mission as a servant of God!

May God give each of us, as Men of the Bible--in the year of our Lord, 2024--the tongue to speak God's Word for a weary world, and an ear to hear and listen, and respond, to His calling!

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