

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

Harry A. Ironside, Litt.D.

Copyright @ 1952

ISAIAH CHAPTER FIFTY -

WHY ISRAEL HAS BEEN SET ASIDE

WE ARE next shown why Israel has been set to one side during the present age. The question is put, **“Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement?”** Why did God divorce His earthly bride? Israel is spoken of as the wife of the Lord, but during the present time she is like a divorced wife. God no longer recognizes her as in covenant relation with Himself and the question arises as to Why? Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement? On what grounds did God set her aside? Why was she divorced? Then the answer comes:

“Wherefore, 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 stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I 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” (verses 2-6).

What a wonderful passage! Ask any thoughtful Jew to consider this carefully, for here the Lord says why He set Israel to one side. **“Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?”** When who came? we must ask. The rabbi must acknowledge that unquestionably it was when the Lord visited Israel, when He says, **“There was no one to welcome Me. I am the One that clothes the heavens with blackness. I make sackcloth their covering. I dry up the sea, and make the rivers a wilderness.”** He refers to the time when He dried up the waters of the Red Sea and later the waters of the Jordan for Israel to go through. It is the Eternal God speaking, the God of creation. There is no change in the Person as He continues to tell how He came down to earth in humiliation. One who says Himself that He clothes the heavens with blackness and dries up the sea, who has creatorial power. Here we have an indication of the Trinity; He says, **“The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned,”** or the disciple, I who clothe the heavens with blackness have come down to earth and taken the place of a disciple. It was the Lord Jesus Christ in infinite grace, coming down here in humiliation, choosing to lay aside, as it were, His rightful claim to full Deity.

It is not that He laid aside His Deity - He could not do that - but He refused to act in the power of His own omnipotence, He chose on earth to learn from the Word of God and to be subject to the Holy Spirit.

He **“increased,”** we are told, **“in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”** And He said, Leeser, in a Jewish commentary suggests that **“The Lord hath given Me the power of the disciple, that I might learn how to comfort the weary with the Word.”** How that fits in with the Saviour’s own invitation: **“Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”**

“We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but [One who] was in all points tempted like as we are,” and **“is able to succour them that are tempted.”** He came down to this earth and went through all human experience, apart from sin, entering fully into our sorrows, our griefs, and troubles, thus learning in a practical way how to comfort the weary with the Word. And what treatment did He receive in return?

“I 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” (verse 6).

That lowly Man in Pilate’s judgment-hall is delivered over to the soldiers, who gathered about Him, and in their ribaldry laughed, and smote Him and exposed Him to all kinds of vulgarities and indecencies. This was God manifest in the flesh. This then tells us why the divorced state, why, for the present, Israel has been set to one side. They rejected their Messiah when He came in lowly grace.

“Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow” (verse 11).

Who has ever suffered, or has ever known greater sorrows nationally than Israel? And we who once rejected Christ too, but through grace have had our eyes opened to receive Him as our Saviour, how our hearts should go out in yearning love and compassion to Israel with their eyes still blinded. How we need to pray for them, but we are so forgetful. When some Hebrew Christian spoke of his blinded brethren in our prayer meetings, how his hearers prayed for Israel when he was there. But if he were not, prayer-meeting after prayer-meeting might pass without petitions for them. Prayer ascended for everything else, and everyone else, but no one ever voiced a request for Israel unless special attention was called to it. Yet God has said, **“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee.”**

Alas, Israel kindled her own fire! They tried to walk in the light of the teachings of the rabbis, but have found sorrow upon sorrow and will never be released - fully released, rather - until they look upon Him whom they pierced, and they mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son and as one who is in bitterness for his firstborn.

~ end of chapter 50 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
