

Messiah Answers the Call
Isaiah 50:4-11

October 16, 2011

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^C Luke 2:46-47, 49; Matthew 11:28; Prov 25:11, John 5:30, 7:16-17, 14:24

^D Hebrews 5:8, 10:7, 9; Mark 1:35

^E Matthew 27:14; John 19:10-11

^F Luke 9:51; Hebrews 1:3

^G Job 23:10; Acts 2:32-36; Romans 4:25

^H Psalm 46:1, Romans 8:33-34, John 12:31

^I John 16:33

^J Proverbs 6:27

^K 1 Peter 2:21

^L Romans 8:29

A. Introduction

1. In our Scripture reading this morning, Isaiah 50

a. the Speaker in verses 1-3 is the Lord Himself: Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel

b. then abruptly the Speaker changes in verses 4 through 9

(A) He speaks of the Lord in the third person; as 'He' and as 'the Lord God', or, in the Hebrew, by the name 'Adonay Yahweh' – the covenant God of Israel who is Sovereign over all His creation – the NIV translation 'Sovereign Lord' well conveys this meaning

(B) so who is speaking?

(C) a comparison with the preceding chapters tells us that these words are being spoken by the Servant of Yahweh, the Servant of the Lord

(D) look back, for example, to what He said in Isaiah 49:1, 'Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me.'

(E) and then a few verses later in Isaiah 49:5-6, 'And now says the Lord, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honoured in the sight of the Lord, And My God is My strength), He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'" – those words relate the Speaker's call as the Servant of the Lord to service

(F) and thus the Speaker is the Servant of the Lord; and who is this Servant of Yahweh?

(G) well, while that term can sometimes be used of the prophet Isaiah himself, it is evident that from these chapters that Isaiah's ministry, calling and person never extended to the description of this Servant's ministry, calling and Person.

(H) again, sometimes the term servant of Yahweh can be used of Israel herself; but again in these chapters it is again evident that this faithful Servant is in sharp contrast to unfaithful Israel; that this Servant is the true Israel of God; God's chosen One

(I) so the Speaker in these verses is Messiah; He is Christ – the two names are the same and denote

the same Person – the Anointed One, anointed by God to be Prophet, Priest and King – and sent by God to be Saviour of the world. When we say Christ, we mean Messiah; when we say Messiah we mean Christ – the one is the OT name in Hebrew; the other is the NT name in Greek.

(J) these verses are part of Messiah's response or answer to His being called to service as the Servant of the Lord.

c. then the Speaker in verses 10-11 returns to being the Lord Himself

2. Living in Calling Distance

a. A story is told of two men, the elder of whom was urging upon the younger the claims of Christian work and encouraging him to follow the call of the Lord. The younger answered with an excuse that had a familiar ring, "But I have never felt any compelling call to give my life in that way." "Are you sure you are living within calling distance?" was the somewhat disquieting reply.^{-{2}}.

b. Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, Son of Man lived within calling distance: 'And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.' (Luke 2:52) and so by the Spirit's anointing was appointed to be Jesus the Christ, the Servant of the Lord

c. let us look at the verses before us today to see how prophetically Jesus answered God's call and what it means for us today: there is

(A) The Discipleship of Christ, verses 4-5

(B) The Commitment of Christ, verses 6-7

(C) The Justification of Christ, verses 8-9

(D) The Division by Christ, verses 10-11

B. Discipleship of Christ 50:4-5

1. Christ as Learner (verse 4) – 'The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple'.

a. it is easy for us as we emphasise the Deity of Christ, that His is indeed really God, to forget the Humanity of Christ, that He is truly man, and also to forget that as a man he was a learner; that is, a disciple Himself

- b. but he was a disciple as no other disciple has ever been or ever will be
- c. for from His early years He was in communion with His Father in heaven, and also actively studying, so that when He was twelve when they visited Jerusalem, we read in Luke 2:46-47, 'Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.' and in verse 49 the young Jesus says, 'Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?', or in the AV, 'business' – but actually neither the word 'house' or 'business' is in the Greek, which may be rendered 'with those things that belong to My Father'. Then He went with His parents back to Nazareth and 'continued in subjection to them.'
- d. God the Son, Maker of the Universe, as the lowly carpenter's son had to learn in both the natural and spiritual realms, just as you and I
- e. Christ had to learn in order that He prepare Himself to carry out His role as the Servant of the Lord
 - (A) that He could give with full knowledge His gracious invitation to the weary, Matthew 11:28, 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' – weary with the burden of guilt, the strife with sin, the difficulties of life – as Proverbs 25:11, says, 'Like apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances.'
 - (B) that He could in turn teach His disciples the message He had from the Father; one He awakened each morning to hear for His Father
 - (1) John 5:30, 'I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.'
 - (2) John 7:16-17, 'So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 'If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.'"
 - (3) John 14:24, 'He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.'
- f. but Jesus, the Christ, was a learner in a way that is far beyond us, as the next verse emphasizes:

2. Christ as Listener (verse 5) – ‘The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back.’
 - a. in these words, we discover the extraordinary way in which Jesus the Christ learned from the Father
 - b. that His ear was opened by God Himself so that He readily heard God’s message to listen as a disciple
 - c. in the word hearken, which some consider to be out of date, we have combined the two ideas: that of hearing or listening, and that of giving attention to what is being said in order to obey what is said
 - d. Jesus Christ, as Listener, heard in order to obey;
 - (A) obedience was one of the things He learned, Hebrews 5:8, ‘Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.’
 - (B) as is prophesied in the Psalm 40:8, ‘I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.’, so it was fulfilled in His life, Hebrews 10:7, 9
 - e. and because of His daily communion with His father – Mark 1:35 says ‘In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.’ – there was no hesitation in His obedience; ‘Nor did I turn back,’ He says.
 - f. in this, and in the next verses, we can observe the ...

C. Commitment of Christ 50:6-7

1. Christ’s Sovereign Patience (verse 6) – ‘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.’
 - a. I use the word patience because it conveys both the idea of suffering (e.g. a patient in a hospital) and of persevering through that suffering; Christ conducted Himself regally throughout His Passion (that word has the same root as patience (patior), which means to suffer)
 - b. as you read the gospel accounts of the so-called trials of Jesus, you are left realizing the neither the religious rulers of the Jews, nor the secular rulers of the Romans, but rather that it was the lowly Jesus of Nazareth that was in charge; the real sovereign power present was God in Christ
 - c. Pilate, as governor and judge, would have heard many cases and the excuses and pleas of the accused to escape being punished. But when Jesus was accused, Matthew 27:14 records, ‘And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.’ – it would have been really something that this hardened, political animal called Pilate should be amazed

- d. Thus , when Pilate said, John 19:10-11, ‘... “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”’ – Pilate, in uncharacteristic fashion made further efforts to release Him
 - e. the prophecy of Isaiah makes clear that it was Jesus that gave Himself up to death in accordance with the will of His Father; and so it happened, and all that this verse foretells were carried out exactly and recorded in the four gospels: the scourging, beating Him, slapping His face, and spitting on Him; and yet in all this there is to be seen ...
2. Christ’s Supreme Confidence (verse 7) – ‘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.’
- a. in verse 6 we are told hat Messiah would not cover or hide His face from humiliation, from the insults, acts and reproaches that bring shame
 - b. and yet, in this verse He is not disgraced, He is not ashamed (related words are used in the Hebrew); they cannot shake Him
 - c. for Christ’s trust is in His Father in heaven
 - d. in the last year of His ministry we discover in the gospel a number of predictions by Jesus of His coming death AND resurrection; foretelling not only His suffering but also of His ultimate victory – sayings which confused and puzzled His disciples
 - e. so His whole advance through His ministry was with the confidence that He would not fail in His mission to bring salvation to mankind
 - f. in the final days of His ministry, Luke 9:51 describes this, and the RSV aptly captures the meaning of the Greek: ‘When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.’ – a face like flint shows total determination and commitment, which came with the assurance that death would be followed by resurrection, by ascension and by being ‘sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high’ Hebrews 1:3; these brought ...

- D. Justification of Christ 50:8-9
1. Christ's Vindication (verse 8) – '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.'
 - a. Jesus knew that His justification was sure, for He walked with God like Job who could say, 'But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.' (Job 23:10)
 - b. But Job did not know why this was happening to him, whereas Jesus did; Jesus was perfectly aware that He was facing not only enemies in the religious rulers of the Jews and the secular rulers of the Romans, but, in the language of the courtroom, he was confronting the Adversary, Satan himself
 - c. the message of the early church, from the first sermon by Peter, was that Jesus was the Christ was to be proven by the fact of the resurrection; that by God's raising Jesus from the dead and by His ascension into heaven, God was demonstrating that Jesus is both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:32-36)
 - d. thus His work on the cross having been made complete, Messiah would be ...
 2. Christ Victorious (verse 9) – '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.'
 - a. when I went to live with my grandparents in East York, one of the first things I noticed on the wall of the closed in porch was a framed Bible verse: 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' (Psalms 46:1 AV) – this is the second time in these verses Messiah repeats that same thought
 - b. because God was with him; and, because the believer is in Christ by a faith relationship, so the Christian, too, is victorious and Paul can use similar words to show our victorious position in Christ, Romans 8:33-34, 'Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.'
 - c. the enemy, we are told, will be consumed
 - (A) of the earthly enemies that is true – they have long ago turned to dust, while Jesus Christ lives, eternal in the heavens
 - (B) and the victory over Satan the Enemy was anticipated in John 12:3` , 'Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.'
 - d. which brings us to our closing verses and how that on account of Jesus Christ there is a ...

E. Division by Christ 50:10-11

1. of the world is into two camps; first
2. Into the God-Fearing (verse 10) – ‘Who is among you that fears the Lord, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.’
 - a. although the speaker changes from Messiah, the challenge nevertheless arises from His example and work that have just been described
 - b. the people of God who are addressed in this verse are not identified by their situation but by their position in respect to Messiah
 - c. it is somewhat enlightening to see that the spiritual position of the believer and his physical situation are often in sharp contrast
 - d. here they may be walking in darkness; ‘These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.’ (John 16:33); there are similar words of challenge here for those that cannot see the light at the tunnel’s end
 - e. let them put their trust and reliance upon God; on the Name of the Lord – the Name by which He makes known to us who He is and what He is like and most importantly to which He attaches all His promises by an oath, so that we may rely utterly upon them; and second the division ...
3. Into the God-Forsaking (verse 11) – ‘Behold, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle yourselves with firebrands, Walk in the light of your fire And among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand: You will lie down in torment.’
 - a. this group, too, finds themselves in darkness
 - b. but their remedy has nothing to do with trusting in God’s name or relying upon Him
 - c. they will light their own fire; they will fan up the sparks of their own abilities
 - d. the fire here is not the fire of God’s wrath, but the fire of evil doing such as of which Proverbs 6:27 speaks, ‘Can a man take fire in his bosom And his clothes not be burned?’, and yet, nevertheless, leads eventually to the wrath of God as the chapter closes,
 - e. ‘you will lie down in torment’
4. so that we are left here with two choices and no middle ground

F. Conclusion

1. Christ Our Example

- a. thus then, Messiah would answer God's call; that, then, is the example and challenge Jesus Christ left to us by His obedient life
- b. 'For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps' (1 Peter 2:21)
- c. will we respond as Jesus Christ did to the call of God to us?
- d. in preparation for this message, I came upon this statement: 'God did not primarily call us to be holy men and holy women but to evangelize the world.'
- e. well, as important and necessary as evangelism is, I must respectfully disagree with that statement

2. The Calling of God which brings salvation – regeneration, justification, glorification – to the believer

- a. that calling of God has then the primary goal of God's calling is what WE ARE TO BE
- b. that as well as being saints in name – holy men and holy women – we are to become saints in fact; we are to grow more and more like Christ
- c. Romans 8:29 sums this up by described it as our becoming 'conformed to the image of His Son'
- d. and if we nurture the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to this end, then
- e. the secondary goal of God of God's calling, which is HOW WE SERVE HIM, will naturally come to pass
- f. for in following Christ, we like the early apostles, cannot help but bear testimony of our Saviour to our own lost and dying world.

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan

Volume 6, Isaiah, by Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland;

EJY – The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans

K&D – Commentary on the Old Testament, by Keil & Delitzsch; Volume 7, Isaiah, by Franz Delitzsch

Kerux – The sermon and illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick to be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. Kerux illustration #33027