

## August 17

**Scriptures:** Read Isaiah 50, 51 & 52

**Key Verse:** "...Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem?..." (Isaiah 50:2)

### Overview

The question concerning Judah's certificate of divorce is rhetorical, implying there was none; whereas it was clearly stated that the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been given a certificate of divorce (Jer. 3:8). God did not abandon His people, but the implication is that the people had abandoned God and broken their relationship with Him. Their own iniquity and deafness to His warnings and appeals led them to be sold into slavery. The time of the Babylonian Exile, then, was like a period of separation (54:6-8), but at any time God desired, He could deliver them with His all-powerful arm. The God who controls nature is also able to sovereignly exert His power and influence in the affairs of man (50:1-3).

In sending Jesus, God personally intervened in the affairs of man. He empowered and gave His Servant, Jesus the Messiah, knowledge and wisdom. Unlike the people of Judah, Jesus was not rebellious, nor did He turn away from God. Rather, He had daily communion with God, "morning by morning" (50:4). He was obedient to the Father, even unto suffering and death. He willingly endured the beatings, abuse, and humiliation (50:6; Matt. 26:39, 67; 27:26), yet through it all He knew that God would be His strength and help. With a strong resolve, Jesus set His face "like a flint" to do God's will (50:7), knowing that ultimately He would be the victor.

In chapter 51, the Lord addresses His faithful remnant "who follow after righteousness" and who "know righteousness" (51:1, 7). He exhorts them to look to their forefather Abraham, "the rock" from which they were hewn, and to their humble beginnings (the "hole of the pit"). God wants them to recall His faithfulness and understand that the Lord is still faithful and will continue to be faithful to the righteous. Just as He redeemed His joyous people from Egypt ("Rahab", 51:9; Ex. 15) and prepared the Promised Land for them. So too He will create a new and flourishing Jerusalem that will be filled with everlasting joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and singing unto Him by all the redeemed whose sorrows will flee away (51:3, 10-11; Rev. 15:3; 21:4).

His Kingdom of righteousness and justice will enlighten all people who will submit to His authority. The Gentiles ("coastlands") will also experience His salvation and trust in Him. Although the heavens and the earth will pass away, the salvation of the souls of the righteous will last forever. For this reason they are to have hope, be encouraged, and not fear, since those who persecute them will only meet with doom; but the people of God will enjoy His blanket of protection over them and will find comfort and hope in the promises of His Word (51:7-8, 12-16).

One of God's promises was to restore His people from the Babylonian captivity. Isaiah explains that because of the sin that prevailed in Jerusalem, especially under Manasseh (2 Kings 24:3), she had to drink the cup of God's fury and suffer destruction and desolation. Yet the day of forgiveness and restoration would come, and at that time God would take the cup of His fury out of His people's hands and put it into the hands of Babylon, their oppressors (52:17-23). At that time, Jerusalem would once again be adorned with beauty, for the chains of the unclean

Babylonians would be thrown off (52:1-2), just as they were with the Egyptians and Assyrians. The Lord would show Himself Sovereign over the world power of Babylon, and He would do this for His Name's sake, for every day that God's people were held as their captives, they would blaspheme Him, believing themselves to be more powerful than God. In the day of their judgment and His people's deliverance, however, they would know that the true and all-powerful God was the God of Israel, and they would have to proclaim: "Your God reigns!" (52:4-7). Likewise, in the great and terrible day of God's judgment upon the whole earth, all people will see the salvation that God grants to His people (52:10). They will behold in amazement the highly exalted reigning King of kings, the Servant Jesus who was marred from the crucifixion (52:13-14).

Those who carried the good news to Jerusalem of the Lord's liberation of the captives from Babylon serve as types of the missionaries who would one day fulfill the Lord Jesus' mandate to go into all the world with the good news of the Gospel (52:7; Rom. 10:15, 16), Their feet are beautiful because they carry the best news of all-God's love, redemption, and freedom from spiritual bondage through Jesus, and this news brings true peace and everlasting salvation. Those who have been justified through faith in Jesus are now the holy priesthood of the Lord. Just as the Lord wanted all His priests to leave the land of defilement (Babylon) and be clean, so too He desires that we, His priests today, become separated from worldliness; then God promises to go before them and also protect them from behind, for He would be pleased with them, and with their sin removed, He could draw near to them (52:11-12).

## **Prayer**

Thank You, Lord, that Your hand is not shortened. Your mighty hand reached all the way down to the cross and there redeemed us. May our hands not be short today in reaching out to others who need a helping hand, helping in some area of need and most of all helping them to put their hand in Yours.