

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 50:4-9, THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

The Servant, although not specifically introduced as such, speaks again (vv. 4-9) and reveals His faithfulness to minister in accordance with the will of Yahweh. He knows that with God's help, no one can successfully oppose Him. Constable calls this Servant Song "autobiographical" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 143]. It is Yahweh speaking in vv. 10-11.

According to the revelation of verse 6, we know that His mission may have looked like a failure for a time, but in the end, He will be successful and accomplish all that He was sent to do. We know that the Servant is going to suffer terribly at the hands of those who oppose God, but He will not turn back and abandon the mission which He came to fulfill; Yahweh will vindicate Him. Through His suffering, the Servant will be able to sustain the weary with His words of comfort. The revelation of the Suffering Servant is revealed further in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Isaiah 50:4 ⁴The Lord God [אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה] has given Me the tongue of disciples [לִמְדָה], That I may know how to sustain [עוֹרָה] the weary [יָעֵרָה] one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

The Lord Yahweh, also translated as sovereign GOD [NET Bible], means "Sovereign LORD, formally, Majestic Lord Yahweh, i.e., a title of the true God with a focus on the authority and majesty of a ruler, yet also implying a relationship based on promise, covenant, or other relational factors" [James A Swanson, s.v. "אֱלֹהֵי," *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domain: Hebrew (Old Testament)*]. "According to Robert B. Girdlestone, the name 'Jehovah Adonai' means that 'God is the owner of each member of the human family, and that He consequently claims the unrestricted obedience of all' (*Synonyms of the Old Testament*, Eerdmans, 1951; p. 34). So the emphasis here is on the Servant's submission to the Lord God in every area of His life and service" [Warren W. Wiersbe, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament: The Prophets*, 56]. This "Sovereign Lord" construction is found here in the only Servant passage in which it occurs and that is for a total of four times (vv. 4, 5, 7, 9). "Perhaps its function is not only to impress on the reader the intimate association of the Servant with the Ruler of the universe, but also to emphasize both the seriousness of the calling and the certainty of the vindication. The Almighty Lord is the one who has called, not just anyone; therefore, the mission cannot fail" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 323].

This is a revelation by the Servant that Yahweh is ministering to Him and discipling or teaching and training Him. As God, the Servant needs no training or learning, but as man He did have to learn things, and learn things He did. As a perfect human being, He had to learn, but He was also a perfect student who learned quickly and well.

Luke 2:52 ⁵²And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

John 8:28 ²⁸So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

Disciple, לִמְדָּן, refers to a learner, i.e., one who is taught by another person and who learns from that teacher his knowledge and belief. In this context, it is referring to the reception of revelation, formally meaning to give the tongue of a disciple, which here refers to the reception of clear knowledge from God which is then meant to be spoken to others. "The Lord gave the Suffering Servant a 'tongue of the learned,' that is, the gift of inspirational and instructive speech ..." [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 552]. The root word is לָמַד which has the sense of training as well as educating.

"And, because he has been discipled by the Lord in how to speak and what to say, he is able to exercise an effective spoken ministry: *to know the word that sustains*" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 317].

"His mind was submitted to the Lord God so that He could learn His work and His will. Everything Jesus said and did was taught to Him by His Father. He prayed to the Father for guidance and meditated on the Word. What God taught the Servant, the Servant shared with those who needed encouragement and help" [Warren W. Wiersbe, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament: The Prophets*, 56].

In Isaiah 49:2, we learned that the Servant's mouth was like a sharp sword, which represents the proclamation of the Word of God (Eph. 6:17), and that is the same issue being addressed here. The Servant is to proclaim the Word of God to all who need to hear it, which is everyone. Here it is particularly addressed to the issue of sustaining the weary. Not only is the Servant well-taught and therefore fully informed, He is able to inform others, specifically the weary, and thereby comfort them with the words He has learned.

Sustain, עוֹת, is a word used only here and the meaning is uncertain. It is variously translated "to sustain" (NASB, ASV, CSV, ESV, ISV), "to help" (LEB, NET Bible), or "to aid" (LSV, YLT). The explanatory NET Bible translation note reads: "Heb 'to know [?] the weary with a word.' Comparing it with Arabic and Aramaic cognates yields the meaning of 'help, sustain.' Nevertheless, the meaning of עוֹת ('ût) is uncertain. The word occurs only here in the OT. Various scholars have suggested an emendation to עֲנוֹת ('ānôt) from עֲנָה ('ānâh, 'answer'): 'so that I know how to respond kindly to the weary.' Since the Qumran scroll 1QIsa^a and the Vulgate support the MT meaning, that reading is retained" [NET Bible, s.v. "Isaiah 50:4," 1302, n. p]. The KJV and the NKJV read "That I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." That translation requires an emended text from 'ût to 'ēṭ, meaning "season." "... but the oldest suggestion is still possible, relating the verb to the noun 'ēṭ, 'a timely moment, a season', hence 'to be seasonable', 'to speak a word in season'" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 317]. The agreement among the manuscripts argues against an emendation. The texts seem to be in agreement; we just aren't sure exactly what the word means.

Weary, נָעַץ, means to be fatigued or wearied referring to a weary one, i.e., an exhausted person who is therefore considered to be a fatigued person. The sense is that of someone who is physically and mentally fatigued. The Scriptures indicate that God does, in fact, help the weary. Weariness is the state of all people when they are enmeshed in the difficulties of life lived in the satanic world system. Motyer suggested the word is referring to "'fainting' under life's demands" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 317]. In Isaiah 40:29-30, the weary were described as those who lack might or power, who grow weary and tired, and those who are otherwise vigorous, but who stumble badly through life. They will be given strength to meet these challenges by the Servant's words. The Servant's education is not for His benefit; it is for the purpose of upholding those who are wearied by the world's constant attack on mankind's well-being.

Isaiah 40:29 ²⁹He gives strength to the weary [נָעַץ], And to *him* who lacks might He increases power.

Matthew 11:28 ²⁸"Come to Me, all who are weary [κοπιῶν] and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

The Servant is a dedicated student. He listened and learned day by day as explained in the idiom "morning by morning." This suggests an orderly, consistent process. God is an equally dedicated teacher; He awakens the Servant in order to teach Him. The Servant not only listens; He hears, which implies a successful transmission of knowledge that results in understanding. One of the condemnations leveled against Israel was, in addition to not hearing and therefore not knowing (Is. 48:8), that they heard, but they did not perceive the meaning and the significance of what was heard (Is. 6:9). The Servant is not only taught in terms of the transmission of information from teacher to disciple, but He is taught how to convey this information in ways that the weary will find comforting and uplifting. Implied in all this is that disciples are those who know the Word and only those who know the Word can accurately teach it to others while also making it meaningful and uplifting.

The Servant is a serious disciple; He stays the course. He is obedient and He perseveres in obedience. God gave Him the ability to hear and respond in conformity with what was heard.

Isaiah 50:5 ⁵The Lord GOD has opened [פָּתַח] My ear; And I was not disobedient [מָרָה] Nor did I turn back [אָחֹזר לֹא נִסְוֶגְתִּי].

Open, פָּתַח, means to be open referring to being in a position that allows movement or sight between two spaces. This word is used here as a metaphor for understanding and learning. We can hear words being spoken without accepting them as truth, or we can fail to understand them, but the Servant will not only hear, He will understand and learn.

Disobedient, מָרָה, means to be contentious, rebellious, defiant, or disobedient relating to being openly defiant of an authority implying hostility and including the refusal to obey a command. The grammar here indicates that the Servant was not disobedient, which is in sharp contrast to the Israelites as individuals, the nation Israel, and the world's Gentiles

all of whom are disobedient to varying degrees. We need look no further than the prophets Jonah and Jeremiah to know that hearing and understanding what God is saying do not necessarily lead to obedience. Even Moses offered excuses about why He could not do God's clearly understood will (Ex. 3:11, 4:10-13) and Jeremiah did (Jer. 1:6) as well. Jonah engaged in overt, rebellious disobedience, and Jeremiah attempted to refrain from speaking God's Word, but he could not keep from it.

Jonah 1:1–3 ¹The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, ²"Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." ³But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jeremiah 20:9 ⁹But if I say, "I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name," Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding *it* in, And I cannot endure *it*.

He did not turn away from His assignment either. The text literally reads, "backwards not I turned Myself back" [אָהוּר לֹא נָסוּגְתִי]. "*Drawn back*: literally 'slip away backwards, take evasive action. In other words, the revelation he received was one that made demands from which there would be a natural tendency to 'back off'" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 317].

The next verse is an explicit revelation of the suffering that awaited the Servant at the endpoint of His public ministry during His First Advent.

Isaiah 50:6 ⁶ I gave [נָתַן] My back to those who strike [נָכְהוּ] Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.

Gave, נָתַן, means to give, or to put/set referring to placing an object or idea in the possession or control of another, implying value of the object, as well as purpose for the exchange. In this context, the sense is that of delivering or surrendering someone or something to another, especially to an authority. This verb is in the perfect tense meaning completed action, but this is another example of the prophetic perfect. It has not happened at the time of writing, but it is so certain to come to pass, that it is written as though it is already accomplished.

Motyer called "giving" and "not covering" "perfects of resolve." "Already therefore he is exhibiting the resoluteness which will reappear in verse 7, and for this reason we could well translate the following verbs as 'perfects of resolve': when the will of God was revealed 'I resolved to give my back ... not to hide ...'. There was a forewarning of hardship to come, and it was bravely faced, resolutely accepted and perseveringly carried through" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 317].

In this case, the Servant is giving Himself up to this treatment, evidenced by the personal pronoun, "I gave;" no one is forcing Him to submit to it. There is obviously an immense amount of theological importance attached to the revelation in this verse in all areas of

biblical theology, but particularly in terms of Soteriology as later revelation in Isaiah will reveal.

Giving His back to those who strike Him is a reference to the beating and the scourging that will occur immediately prior to the Suffering Servant's death on the cross, but we know that only because of progressive revelation and from our vantage point in terms of world history. Isaiah's audience at that time did not have any knowledge of the Servant's future fate beyond these verses concerning the suffering the Servant was going to experience in the future.

Strike, *נָכַח*, means to strike, to smite, to wound, and to strike dead. This verb form is causative meaning those who strike Him are causing or inflicting those injuries on Him. In this verb form, the word refers to destroying or ruining an object so as to cause its destruction. While the scourging the Lord suffered did not kill Him, that kind of physical abuse was sufficient to cause death. He was so weakened after the scourging that He could not carry His cross to the place of execution, and a man named Simon of Cyrene was enlisted to carry it for Him (Mt. 27:32).

Matthew 27:26 ²⁶Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged [*φλαγγέλιον*], he handed Him over to be crucified.

Scourging was a serious punishment, but there were degrees in terms of the methods used to inflict varying levels of punishment. "Under the Roman method the culprit was stripped, stretched with cords or thongs on a frame, and beaten with rods.... There were two ways of scourging—one with thongs or whips made of rope ends or straps of leather, the other with rods or twigs" [Merrill F. Unger, s.v. "Scourge," *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 1141]. A more serious form of scourging used what was called a scorpion which was a whip with sharp or pointed objects braided into it and which was designed to inflict a massive amount of damage to tissue. There is no doubt that the Lord was subjected to a whip, *φλαγγέλιον*, meaning a scourge or a whip. Most theologians believe the Lord suffered the punishment of the scorpion. A whip was certainly used rather than rods, but the text does not say that the scorpion was used. It may have been, but the New Testament text does not reveal that.

He also gave Himself over to the humiliation of having His beard torn out, of being mocked, of being physically attacked, and of having people spit in His face. Having one's beard torn out was apparently a shameful societal insult to the one suffering the indignity.

Matthew 26:67 ⁶⁷Then they [scribes and elders] spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him,

Matthew 27:27–30 ²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole *Roman* cohort around Him. ²⁸They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰They spat on Him, and took the reed and *began* to beat Him on the head.

He willingly suffered this abuse, and He did not try to minimize it once it began. "The Servant said He gave Himself over to this type of treatment. It is one thing to endure such treatment, but it is quite another to gladly submit to it without defending oneself. These descriptions picture persecution that Jesus Christ endured literally. If we did not have the fulfillment of this prophecy in the life of the Lord Jesus, it would be easy to interpret this verse as only a figurative, poetic description of suffering. The literal fulfillment of this and other first advent prophecies should encourage us to expect the literal fulfillment of second advent prophecies. Jesus laid down His life on His own initiative" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:144]. I would disagree with Constable that the Lord "gladly" suffered to the extent that we know He did. He did ask the Father to "remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36).

Some theologians place the church in this verse and claim it is the church and the Head of the church who is undergoing this persecution. Besides the theological imposition of the church into the text, which is not there, the church has never perfectly, willingly suffered persecution. Some individual believers have willingly suffered and even gone to their deaths, but there have always been those who flee the church when serious persecution erupts. For the same reason, this cannot be a description of the nation Israel. "It would be impossible for any sinful human being, no matter how fine a person he was, to undergo the sufferings herein described without a spirit of rebellion welling up within him. And if a spirit of revenge took hold of him, we might well understand.... Only one who was entirely without sin could undergo such suffering without a rebellious spirit.... The only One who can so patiently suffer is the One without sin, the Christ of God" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:301].

The Sovereign God who instructed the Servant will also help Him meet the challenges He will face. The conjunction that opens verse 7 links it with verse 6. The point being made is that even under the most severe imposition of physical harm, the Servant will continue to fulfill the assignment given Him by the Sovereign God.

Isaiah 50:7 ⁷For the Lord GOD helps [עֲזָרָה] Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced [כָּלָה]; Therefore, I have set My face like flint [חֲלָקִישׁ], And I know that I will not be ashamed [בוֹשׁ].

Help, עֲזָרָה, means to help, to aid, and to support referring to giving aid or assistance to another. The sense is that of giving help or assistance and to be of service. The interesting thing about this revelation is that when it is the Lord God helping, there is no better and no more effective help to be found. Because God Himself is helping, the Servant cannot be disgraced, He courageously keeps the mission set before Him, and He cannot be ashamed in any way. This verb form is imperfect referring to incomplete action. God is continually helping Him accomplish His mission.

Disgrace, כָּלָה, means to be humiliated or disgraced, reproach, to treat shamefully referring to being put to shame which places one into a position of low status and little honor or respect resulting in shame being thrust upon the person. This suggests the ultimate victory of the Servant. His First Advent appeared to end in failure, but that is not the end of the story. His ministry is often referred to as His humiliation (cf. Phil. 2:5-11; Heb.

2:9), but His resurrection and His still to occur Second Coming will result in His glory. In the end, there is no humiliation or disgrace; there is triumph and God's glory for all the world to see.

Here is an example of what people mean when they refer to Christ's humiliation at His First Advent. "As noted above, Flavel understood the glorious deity of Christ, coexisting with the Father and the Spirit from all eternity, and equal in essence, glory, and majesty. Christ's humanity, according to Flavel, takes a fully opposite character. He frames Christ's incarnation in terms of humiliation: 'The state of Christ, from his conception to his resurrection, was a state of deep debasement and humiliation.' ... The incarnation of Christ must take on the form of humiliation and abasement so that He could then be exalted: 'Christ should be deeply humbled, then highly exalted.' ...

Flavel draws on the "Christ Hymn" in Philippians 2:8, where Paul writes, 'He humbled himself.' He notes that this humiliation is both a real and voluntary abasement. It was real in that 'he did not personate a humbled man, nor act the part of one, but was really, and indeed humbled' before both God and man. Second, it was voluntary. The voluntary humiliation of Christ 'singularly commends the love of Christ to us.' The chronological parameters of Christ's humiliation, according to Flavel, were 'from the first moment of his incarnation to the very moment of his vivification and quickening in the grave.' The humiliation of Christ, then, was made manifest in the real and voluntary work of Christ that lasted only while on earth." [Brian H. Cosby, "The Christology of John Flavel," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 4, no. 1 (January 2012): 122-123.

The concept of being ashamed is similar to being disgraced, and both of them are negated meaning that the end result will result in victory. Ashamed, בּוּיֵשׁ, means to be ashamed, to fail in hope and expectation referring to having a painful feeling and emotional distress (sometimes to the point of despair), by having done something wrong with an associative meaning of having the disapproval of those around them. Again, while things may look this way at the First Advent, they will turn around at the Second Advent which will result in complete victory for the Messiah and God's exaltation around the world.

The concepts of humiliation and exaltation are interconnected one with the other, and that situation was always the plan of God for the Servant. Even though it may look as though He was guilty, He knew that God would help Him to be vindicated in the end.

Philippians 2:8-9 ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Hebrews 12:2 ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

To set the face like flint is to suggest that one possesses the determination, commitment, and grit to see one's mission through to the end. Flint, חֶלְמִישׁ, is a reference to a hard or flinty rock referring to a hard quartz mineral with a focus on the hardness of the material and the resulting difficulty to crack it. It has the sense of being a particular kind of rock

notable for its hardness. "In 'holy hardness of endurance,' as Stier says, he turned his face to his antagonists, without being subdued or frightened away, and was well assured that He whose cause He represented would never leave him in the lurch" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:482]. No matter what happened to Him, the Servant was going to be focused on the completion of His mission. "Persecution will not lead to fear that intimidates or weakens the will to act; instead, abuse will result in an unbreakable commitment (as strong as flint) to continue trusting God. This is a picture of absolute stubborn resistance to giving up his responsibilities, a resolute determination to carry out the will of God" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 383].

Many theologians, probably correctly so, link the determination characterized by setting the face as Isaiah has it with Luke 9:51 where it is recorded that the Lord determined to go to Jerusalem. Some believe that Isaiah was prophesying that event (cf. Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*: 1284).

Luke 9:51 ⁵¹When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined [τὸ πρόσωπον ἐστήρισεν] to go to Jerusalem;

The Greek text reads, "the face He resolutely set," which is very similar to the Isaiah text.

Luke 9:51 ⁵¹... that He fixed His face to go on to Jerusalem, (LSV)

Luke 9:51 ⁵¹ ... he set his face to go to Jerusalem (LEB)

The Servant's vindication is certain, and He knows it. This verse is set in terms of a court case being played out in the legal theater. This should remind us of the so-called legal settings that set the stage for the Lord's crucifixion. He appeared before Caiaphas, the scribes, and the elders (Mt. 26:57-58), and then the whole Counsel, i.e., the Sanhedrin (Mt. 26:59-66; Luke 22:66-67). He appeared before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate (Mt. 27:11-26), and He appeared before King Herod (Luke 23:8-11). None of these hearings were conducted in accordance with the appropriate legal procedures in effect.

Isaiah 50:8 ⁸He who vindicates [צַדִּיק] Me is near [קָרֵב]; Who will contend [רִיב] with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me.

Vindicates, צַדִּיק, means to be in the right, to be innocent, to be vindicated, to be just or justified, and to be righteous referring to being in a state in accordance to a standard. It has the sense of being in conformity with justice, custom, law, or morality. This verb is in the causative stem which refers to bringing about justice. The verb essentially indicates a "not guilty" verdict. When God and His Servant are involved in the proceedings, the only possible outcome is an outcome that is completely just and righteous in keeping with God's holy, righteous nature.

The fact that God is near to the Servant is emphasized. Near, קָרֵב, means near or close pertaining to being in close or in very close proximity to an object. It also may mean close in terms of relationship which relates to having a state or condition of intimate association,

as a figurative extension of close spatial proximity. It may refer to a kinsman, that is, a responsible blood relative. All of these things together are applicable to the relationship between God and the Servant, but the personal, kinsman relationship between the two is the primary meaning.

It is important to remember that an innocent man suffered the brutal treatment verse 6 describes. No less a person than the Sovereign God is going to declare Him innocent. This is important because a righteous, blameless man had to pay the sin debt for mankind because no less than such a person was qualified to carry out that mission.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ²¹He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 Peter 3:18 ¹⁸For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

“He had not suffered because He was guilty, as submitting to public humiliation meekly might suggest to observers, but in spite of His innocence” [Thomas L. Constable, “Isaiah” in *Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 145]. “Because in truth He would not be condemned for personal sin but as a representative Servant, bearing the sin of all humanity (Isa. 52:13-53:12). And the resurrection would loose Him from the case in which He was condemned” [Elliott E. Johnson, “Isaiah 50:4-11, The Mission of the Servant in a Darkened World,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, gen. ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, 958].

The Servant asks two questions. First, the Servant issues a challenge to anyone who would stand in a courtroom together with Him and undergo the rigorous examination of evidence that must be presented in a courtroom in order to arrive at a just verdict. Contend, *רִיב*, means to strive or to contend. In this context, that refers to pleading for or bringing forth a lawsuit either in accusation or prosecution, or as a defender in a case. The challenge is to stand together as two opposing parties and present evidence.

No one can successfully bring a charge against Him. Any charge against the Servant is invalid on its face because the Servant cannot commit an offense. Who is over Him such that they can enter into judging Him? No one.

The second question is literally, “Who is the master of My judgment?” The NASB translation of this clause, “Who has a case against Me?” is inadequate. The word that should be translated master or lord is not translated in the NASB. The omitted Hebrew word that should be translated as part of the English text is *בַּעַל*, which means master, lord, owner, or possessor referring to those who have something or someone as owning possessions and controlling the movements and/or activities of them whether they are animate or inanimate. The point being made by the Servant is that no one is qualified to be master over Him and therefore qualified to be judging Him. Some translations use “adversary” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, ESV), “accuser” (NET Bible), or “opponent” (YLT) in this clause, but I don’t see any lexical justification for attaching that meaning to *baal*. The LEB has the most accurate translation, “Who is the master of My judgment?”

Young believes that "master of my judgment" was a common legal expression at the time. "The phrase apparently was widespread in the ancient world, the Romans speaking of the *dominus litis* as the prosecutor and the cuneiform languages using the same expression *bel dini*. Thus, *the master of my judgment* is the one who possesses a judgment against him" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3: 302]. Young may be correct that the concept of prosecutor or one who brings charges is what this came to mean, which makes the use of adversary, accuser, or opponent understandable on the part of these translations, but the Hebrew vocabulary does not seem to allow for the use of those words. That means they are inserting a cultural idea that developed later into the text regardless of the Hebrew.

The next verse has yet another question concerning the concept that who could possibly condemn the Servant when it is the Sovereign God who is helping Him? The obvious answer is, "No one." What God declares to be justified or vindicated can never be counted as unjust or guilty.

Isaiah 50:9 ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns [רָשַׁע] Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them.

This is an emphatic statement declaring the help given the Servant by the Sovereign God. There can be no condemnation for the Servant; God is His Helper or Advocate. He may suffer, but His suffering is unjust, and it will be avenged.

Condemn, רָשַׁע, means to be or become or pronounce guilty referring to being in a state of having done evil and so be liable for a just punishment or penalty. The sense is to declare guilty of wickedness or immorality.

The fate of those who dare to accuse the Servant of any offense will ultimately be the fate of those who reap what they sow. Just as garments fray and decay over time and become useless to the point of being discarded as worthless, so will the fate be of those who charge the Servant with wrongdoing. And just as the moth slowly but surely destroys the cloth upon which it feeds, so will those who oppose the Servant be destroyed.

"The end of those who falsely accused the Servant, would be a slow but inevitable wasting away and disintegration, rather than cataclysmic destruction. God did not vindicate Messiah by judging His accusers immediately, in some dramatic way that resulted in people connecting their judgment with their antagonism toward Messiah. Rather, He allowed them to continue to live but to experience a decline in their fortunes (cf. Pilate, Herod, the Jewish leaders, the Gentiles)" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:145].

As we have studied the book of Isaiah, we have noted how often the prophet moves from his time to the future and back again. Many theologians try to mute the prophetic significance of some of the Scriptures. For example, we have noted numerous explanations of some Scriptures in terms of the Babylonian captivity that, according to what actually will take place in accordance with the facts of the text, must be instead applied to the end of history and the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom. I discovered

an excellent explanation of this situation written by Dr. Elliott Johnson of Dallas Theological Seminary that I think would be worthwhile for you to consider.

“Since NT authors and many evangelical interpreters acknowledge that the Servant Songs prophesy about Jesus, the Messiah, this article will include in the exposition the full meaning in the progress of revelation—*sensus plenus* (full sense) but not *sensus plenior* (fuller sense). This sense acknowledges that NT authors, in their accounts of Jesus in the Gospels and Epistles, fill in meanings alluded to in a song but not directly expressed in the text. Nonetheless, the author intended the full meaning in what was expressed but not a fuller, expanded, or transformed meaning. So, the prophecy of the OT is true; it simply does not state the truth in its entirety. The NT authors specified truths implied in the original prophecy but clarified when the prophecy was fulfilled. An interpretation of a fuller meaning is not an interpretation but a revelation of meanings in addition to the original prophecy” [Elliott E. Johnson, “Isaiah 50:4-11, The Mission of the Servant in a Darkened World,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, gen. ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, 954].