

# The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

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Text

Isaiah 50:1-11

Topic

An indentured servant who freely chose to remain a slave had his ear pierced with a tool called an awl.

Title

***"I'm Awl Ears"***

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**"We stood and watched while God abandoned us, and then we did the best we could."**

That's author Alice Hoffman's conclusion as to why there is so much evil. God must have abandoned us. She's not alone in her assessment. In the movie *Venom* Carlton Drake says, "God has abandoned us. He didn't keep His part of the bargain."

It's one thing for an author who writes about magic, or a comic book villain, to paint God that way. We can dismiss it as ignorance.

**Isaiah's Jewish listeners accused the LORD of abandoning them.**

They forgot one not insignificant detail: **They had brought their troubles upon themselves.** It wasn't God who had abandoned them. No, it was the opposite. It was for their "iniquities" and their "transgressions" that they were being punished.

You and I have not abandoned God. What might you be blaming God for? Accusing Him of not loving you for? Of delaying until it was too late? Maybe nothing... Maybe something... Maybe everything?

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Jesus Never Abandons You**, and **#2 Jesus Always Advocates For You**.

### **#1 - Jesus Will Never Abandon You (v1-7)**

Mega-Church pastor Joshua Harris authored the wildly popular book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. Not too long ago he kissed Jesus goodbye. After announcing his divorce he renounced his faith: "I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus. The popular phrase for this is 'deconstruction,' the biblical phrase is 'falling away.' By all the measurements I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian."

I looked-up 'deconstruction' for you:

*Faith deconstruction, also known as deconstructing faith, evangelical deconstruction, the deconstruction movement, or simply deconstruction, is a phenomenon within American evangelicalism in which Christians rethink their faith and jettison previously held beliefs, sometimes to the point of no longer identifying as Christians. It is closely related to the exvangelical movement.*

I looked-up 'ex-vangelical' for you:

*Ex-vangelical is a social movement of people who have left evangelicalism, especially white evangelical churches in the United States, for atheism, agnosticism, progressive Christianity, or any other religious belief, or lack thereof. People in the movement are called 'ex-vangelicals' or 'exvies.'*

Abandon Jesus and you are not an apostate who denies the Lord who bought you. You're a hip deconstructionist or a trendy ex-vangelical.

Currently, about three-in-ten U.S. adults (29%) are religious "nones" - people who describe themselves as atheists, agnostics or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religious identity. The % grows with each new poll.

The Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He said He'd never leave you, never forsake you. He keeps "His end of the bargain."

We are in the section of Isaiah in which he is introducing the Jewish Messiah. He calls Him the Servant. We know it is Jesus. For one, several verses from Isaiah are applied to Jesus in the NT.

Isa 50:1 Thus says the LORD: "Where *is* the certificate of your mother's divorce, Whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.

We jump right into an illustration in verse one. The LORD compares He and them (they?) to a family - husband, wife, kids. It is OK to call them dysfunctional as long as we understand it applies only to the wife and kids - not the LORD.

It is so Garden of Eden to blame others, or God, is it not? Their situation was of their own doing.

Translators have a tough time with this verse:

- A lot of Bible versions make it sound like the husband did give his wife a certificate of divorce, as required by Jewish law, and a receipt for selling the kids.
- In other versions, the LORD insists He has done no such thing.

The "I've done no such thing" fits best with the context. The LORD challenged them to prove His unfaithfulness. He had not divorced them or else He would have provided a certificate of divorce as required. He had no debts to repay, therefore He had not sold them.

I could be missing something, but this is an illustration - *not* a teaching on marriage & divorce. You shouldn't read anything into it about who is the wife of YHWH and who is the bride of Jesus.

Isa 50:2 Why, when I came, *was there* no man? Why, when I called, *was there* none to answer?...

Remember *I Love Lucy*? What did Ricky say when he came home from work? That's right - "Lucy, I'm home!"

The faithful husband & father comes home after a hard day's work. His wife is gone, having abandoned him and the children. Nevertheless the kids hold dad responsible for all their distresses.

Isa 50:2 ... Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink because *there is* no water, And die of thirst.

The LORD had power to both “redeem” and “deliver” them. He didn’t because they wouldn’t stop sinning.

There are 14 questions asked in these verses. Asking question after question is something God employs to reset our worldview. In Job 38&39 the LORD asks 77 questions. Job is overwhelmed by the LORD’s power tempered by grace. It is a profound reset for him.

God never fatigues, never tires. He doesn’t need retraining for perishable skills. Why doesn’t He flex His spiritual muscles more often? He’s not a poser! Real strength in the Church Age is revealed in our weakness. When we are weak, *then* are we strong.

The image of dead, stinking fish dying of thirst is a throwback to the days just prior to the Exodus from Egypt. He had ten plagues to choose from, plus hundreds of other miracles, signs, and wonders in their history. Why this one?

I don’t know. It does teach us something. Jesus knows what He would say to a person if He were on Earth. Since He is not on Earth He employs us to speak to people for Him. We ought, therefore, to attempt discovering what it is He wants said.

Isa 50:3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, And I make sackcloth their covering.”

Charles Spurgeon applied this to the 3hrs of darkness when Jesus was on the Cross:

*We read that, at high noon, the sun was veiled, and there was darkness over all the land for three black hours. Wonder of wonders, He who hung bleeding there had wrought that mighty marvel! The sun had looked upon Him hanging on the Cross, and, as if in horror, had covered its face, and traveled on in tenfold night. The tears of Jesus quenched the light of the sun. Had He been wrathful, He might have put out its light for ever; but His love not only restored that light, but it has given to us a light a thousand times more precious, even the light of everlasting life and joy.*

As the darkness of that day diminished Jesus announced with a commanding voice, “It is finished!” The time to conquer death by dying had come.

Let’s skip verse four. Don’t worry. We will ‘circle back’ to ‘unpack’ it.

Isa 50:5 The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn away.

In the OT Book of Deuteronomy we learn that indentured servants who desired to remain in the household permanently had their ears pierced. "You shall take an awl and thrust *it* through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever" (15:17). That is what is meant by "opening the ear."

**Adding humanity to His deity through the virgin birth was the penultimate  
'opening of the ear.'**

Isa 50:6 I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

Our context is the accusation that God has abandoned us, leaving us to fend for ourselves. If ever there was a time to call it quits, to abandon the human race, it would have been that long night and day. Jesus didn't quit. He dug in, flint-faced.

Isa 50:7 "For the Lord GOD will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.

- How can a man be beaten so thoroughly that He barely looked human and yet say it was not a disgrace?
- How can He, the most innocent man ever, die the death of a common criminal nailed naked on the main road into Jerusalem and not be ashamed?

Jesus revealed His 'secret.' "For the Lord GOD will help Me." He so trusted in the Father's help that, for His entire life, He "set [His] face like a flint." It's a way of saying that nothing would deter Him from His mission.

The Father did not help Him in ways we would like for Him to help us. He didn't stop the crucifixion. He didn't immediately come and smite the enemies of Christ. In fact, the entire episode came across as the greatest religious failure in the history of the world.

**H**ow did God the Father help Jesus? In many ways, but I would put near or on top of the list that they shared fellowship with each other as the Lord was on the Cross.

The one place in the Bible that seems contrary to this is Psalm 22, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?" People say, "See that? The Father turned anthropomorphic His back on the Son."

He didn't; He couldn't. Read on in Psalm 22, to verse 24 - "For He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and He has not hidden His face from Him, but has heard, when He cried to him."

Can you envision Jesus looking into the Father's face, knowing He had perfectly obeyed Him and was about to finish their work? The Father's face would be beaming with light and love.

## **#2 - Jesus Always Advocates For You (v8-11)**

The scene in Isaiah shifts to Heaven, post-resurrection.

Isa 50:8 *He is* near who justifies Me; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand together. Who *is* My adversary? Let him come near Me.

"Justified" is referring to a Judge. It has a courtroom vibe. Having endured the Cross, Jesus can stand in a heavenly tribunal and declare His total and convincing victory. If any "adversary" wishes to "contend" with Him, as King Theoden said, "Let them come!"

Jesus did not die for Himself. He had no sin. He died for the human race. When you believe Him, God withdraws your sin and puts Jesus' righteousness into your heavenly account. What is true of Him becomes true of you. You will be accused and have to contend with enemies. It is always in the context that Jesus advocates for you.

Isa 50:9 Surely the Lord GOD will help Me; Who *is* he *who* will condemn Me? Indeed they will all grow old like a garment; The moth will eat them up.

This is the OT counterpart to, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). The moth is reminiscent of Jesus encouraging us to think always about Heaven and our future rewards. Moths are not allowed. Neither are thieves or rust.

How will He help? "If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. Who

*is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us (Romans 8:31-34).

Isa 50:10 "Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God.

"Fear the Lord" in this context was a description of those who had been declared righteous by God. My dad used to call Christians, "Born-again." Maybe apostate Jews called righteous Jews, "Fearers," or something like that.

Obedience is beyond us without help.<sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord we not only have "help," He has given us the Helper Himself, God the Holy Spirit, to permanently indwell us individually & corporately.

When we get saved, aren't we removed from the domain of darkness and placed in the kingdom of light? Yes, but you remain on Earth, "among the English" as the Amish put it. The word for "darkness" is a plural; it is "darknesses." The believer is God's light in the peculiar "darknesses" in which you find yourself throughout your lifetime.

The apostle Paul said, "But even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (Second Corinthians 4:3-4).

A thick "veil" prevents unbelievers from 'seeing' the Lord. One commentator likened Satan's veil to virtual reality goggles. You "see," but it is a fantasy, a game, with deadly stakes.

**We have had our virtual reality goggles removed by the power of the Gospel & we see reality.**

Isa 50:11 Look, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle *yourselves* with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled - This you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment.

The unbelievers in verse eleven kindle their own fire. Religion, science, psychology, philosophy; they send out sparks but not sufficient to kindle a fire.

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<sup>1</sup> Read Romans 7

You can sing *Amazing Grace* or *I Did it My Way*. The account Jesus gave of the rich man and Lazarus perfectly illustrates what we mean.

**Y**ou arrive on a Sunday morning or a Wednesday evening and the special guest is Jesus. After He addresses us -hopefully in a Church of Philadelphia way - He opens it up for Q&A.

"Jesus, in the Gospels we see you spending a lot of time alone with our Father. Can you describe a little about that?"

Quoting verse four, "The Lord GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to *him who is weary*. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned."

When Jesus was on the Earth, "morning by morning" He had devotions! More likely, "morning by morning" means "day after day."

It is incredible to think of the Second Person of the Trinity being instructed "how to speak" just the right "word" to people, all of whom are weary from life on a fallen Earth in a corrupting body and eternity in their hearts.

### **Who are the "learned?" You are!**

"Learned" means *those who are instructed*. Having set aside His deity to live an entirely human life, the Lord was instructed by the Father via God the Holy Spirit. The Helper, God the Holy Spirit, is also our resident scholar (John 14:26).

**I**t is arrogant to think God has abandoned us. The fault with the world is not His. It is ours for choosing the wages of sin.

It seems to me that God had two choices:

1. Create the universe exactly as described, knowing what our parents would do and what He would do about it.
2. Or, not create the universe at all.

Behind Door #1 is the incredible sufferings of the human race. But there is also the incredible grace of God.



Job put a foot inside Door #2. "May the day perish on which I was born, And the night *in which* it was said, 'A male child is conceived' " (3:3). But when his suffering was ended he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You" (42:5).

**In the end, everything is going to be awl-right.**