

## 39. Defining an End-Time Separation (Isaiah 50–57)

The divorce of the Lord’s current wife—his covenant people of the Ephraimite Gentiles—who ends up denying her divine spouse, signals a turning point in God’s dealings with his people. From being a highly favored people of God, they now come under covenant curses as the gospel turns from them to Israel’s natural lineages—the Jews, Ten Tribes, and Lamanites. Even when God sends his end-time servant to attempt to reverse his people’s downward slide, they contend with him and he is marred or disfigured because of them. At that point—after he has done all he can for them—the Lord remarries his former spouse, who are his people of the house of Israel.

It isn’t God who divorces his current wife, therefore, but she who divorces him: “Thus says Jehovah: Where is your mother’s bill of divorce with which I cast her out? Or to which of my creditors did I sell you? Surely, by sinning you have sold yourselves; because of your crimes is your mother cast off” (Isaiah 50:1).

Things come to a head when the current wife plays the harlot. And yet the Lord holds out his covenant blessings for those of his people who remain faithful to him: “I will expose your fornication and the wantonness of your exploits. When you cry out in distress, let those who flock to you save you! A wind shall carry all of them off; a vapor shall take them away. But they who seek refuge in me shall possess the earth and receive an inheritance in my holy mountain” (Isaiah 57:12–13).

Those who of the Ephraimite Gentiles who oppose God’s end-time servant are disappointed when the Lord himself sustains and empowers him: “Who has a dispute with me? Let us face one another! Who will bring charges against me? Let him confront me with them! See, my Lord Jehovah sustains me. Who then will incriminate me? Surely all such shall wear out like a garment; the moth shall consume them. Who among you fears Jehovah and heeds the voice of his servant, who, though he walk in the dark and have no light, trusts in the name of Jehovah and relies on his God? But you are lighters of fires, all of you, who illuminate with mere sparks” (Isaiah 50:8–11).

The Lord appeals to his loyal holdouts to be like Abraham and Sarah who separated themselves from their idolatrous kindreds and inherited glorious eternal blessings: “Hear me, you followers of righteousness, seekers of Jehovah: Look to the rock from which you were cut, to the quarry out of which you were hewn; look to Abraham your father, to Sarah who bore you. He was but one when I called him, but I blessed him by making him many” (Isaiah 51:1–2).

Though they may be persecuted for remaining loyal to their God, it won’t be long before those who incriminate themselves perish: “Hear me, you who know righteousness, O people in whose heart is my law: Do not fear the reproach of men; be undaunted by their ridicule. For the moth shall consume them like a garment; moths shall devour them like wool. But my righteousness shall endure forever, my salvation through endless generations” (Isaiah 51:7–8).

The Lord assures his former spouse—his people of the house of Israel—that his love for her is true: “Jehovah calls you back as a spouse forsaken and forlorn, a wife married in youth only to

be rejected, says your God. I forsook you indeed momentarily, but with loving compassion I will gather you up. In fleeting exasperation I hid my face from you, but with everlasting charity I will have compassion on you, says Jehovah, who redeems you” (Isaiah 54:6–8).

God’s end-time servant is his arbiter for gathering a new nation of his people and restoring them to his covenant as did Moses: “Give ear and come unto me; pay heed, that your souls may live! And I will make with you an everlasting covenant: [my] loving fidelity toward David. See, I have appointed him as a witness to the nations, a prince and lawgiver of the peoples. You will summon a nation that you did not know; a nation that did not know you will hasten to you—because of Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, who gloriously endows you” (Isaiah 55:3–5).

God’s servant calls on his fellow-servants to gather the “vessels” (or people) of the house of Israel out of Babylon—out of a world about to be destroyed—as the angels gathered Lot out of Sodom: “Turn away, depart; touch nothing defiled as you leave [Babylon]. Come out of her and be pure, you who bear Jehovah’s vessels. But you shall not leave in haste or go in flight: Jehovah will go before you, the God of Israel behind you” (Isaiah 52:11–12); “The righteous disappear, and no man gives it a thought; the godly are gathered out, but no one perceives that from impending calamity the righteous are withdrawn” (Isaiah 57:1).

Their new exodus is to the place Zion, where the Lord remarries his former wife, now also called Zion. It is a time of great rejoicing as Zion’s descendants far exceed those of the current wife: “Sing, O barren woman who did not give birth; break into jubilant song, you who were not in labor. The children of the deserted wife shall outnumber those of the espoused, says Jehovah” (Isaiah 54:1).

The house of Israel’s marriage to her divine husband resembles rising from the dead: “Awake, arise; clothe yourself with power, O Zion! Put on your robes of glory, O Jerusalem, holy city. No more shall the uncircumcised and defiled enter you. Shake yourself free, rise from the dust; sit enthroned, O Jerusalem. Loose yourself from the bands around your neck, O captive Daughter of Zion. Thus says Jehovah: You were sold without price, and you shall be redeemed without money” (Isaiah 52:1–3).

The Lord comforts his newly married bride whom the peoples of the world had despised, and he turns the tables on them: “Hear this, O wretched one, drunk, though not with wine. Thus says Jehovah, your Lord and God, who defends the cause of his people: I am taking the cup of stupor from your hand; you shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath. And I give it into the hand of your tormentors, those who said of your life, Lie prostrate that we may go over you—so that you made your back as the ground, a mere thoroughfare to passers-by” (Isaiah 51:21–23).