

This finishes the direct treatment of the complaint of Zion but does not conclude the matter; what follows gives a clue to the decisive answer to the whole problem. The full bearing of this answer does not become entirely clear until chapter 53 has been reached, but its main elements are described in the words of the servant in the next section.

The Servant's Declaration

In various sections of the book so far we have had statements by the servant of the Lord that He is to be a light to the Gentiles; that He is to deliver the people from captivity; that He is to set free those who are in bondage. However, up to the present we have not been told in any clear way just how He is to do this. Now the explanation of the way in which He is to do it is begun. The means of redemption which He describes is something which mere human wisdom could never have imagined. Only God Himself could have revealed it.

In 50:4-9 we have a statement by the servant describing the suffering which He is to go through and the great justification which He is to accomplish by it. As we read this passage describing the sufferings of the servant of the Lord -- a theme which has been hardly touched upon thus far -- it is natural to ask whether it is necessary to consider this passage as spoken by the servant, or whether it can be taken instead as a description of the sufferings which Israel is undergoing in exile. The answer to this question is furnished by verse 5. There the speaker declares that He has not been rebellious nor turned away from doing the will of God; giving His back to the smiters, He has voluntarily undergone the sufferings here described. Such a statement is utterly out of harmony with the picture of Israel contained in the previous chapters of this book. Israel was there represented as a servant who is dumb and blind and rebellious. He has been sent into captivity for his sin (Isa. 42:19-24); he has failed to bring any sweet cane to the Lord or any signs of love (43:23-24), but has turned away his ear and been rebellious (48:8). For Israel then to turn to the Lord and say, "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" would be utterly inconsistent with the previous chapters. It is inconceivable