

# Isaiah 50:10-11

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/isa/isa-50/isaiah-5010-11/>

*Isaiah ends the third Servant Song describing two types of men who walk in darkness. The first type fears the LORD but has no light of his own. Isaiah encourages this man to trust in the Messiah. The second man also walks in darkness, but he tries to get along by the dim light of his own fire. Isaiah warns him that this trust is misplaced and will result in his torment.*

The third *Servant Song* (Isaiah 50:4-11) concludes in either the voice of the *Servant* or the voice of Isaiah.

Previously in this *Servant Song*, the *Servant* described how:

- He will be a disciple of *the LORD* (Isaiah 50:4).
- He will be beaten and mocked as He obeys the LORD (Isaiah 50:5-6).  
He was determined to follow *the LORD* because He trusted *the LORD*.
- Despite the humiliation at the hands of His enemies, He knew He would not be ashamed in His sight (Isaiah 50:7).
- He will be vindicated by *the LORD* against all His accusers (Isaiah 50:8-9).

The final two verses of this *Servant Song* describe two different types of people who face similar circumstances.

The first type of person is someone *that fears the LORD* (v 10).

The second type of person is someone that chooses to *walk in the light of [his] own fire* (v 11).

The circumstance they share is that they both *walk in darkness*. That is, they both live without some type of essential knowledge or moral understanding about reality. *Light* and *darkness* are common metaphors throughout the Bible for truth (light) and ignorance (*darkness*), and/or good (light) and evil (*darkness*).

Here *darkness* may be describing people who sin in their ignorance. But despite the similar circumstance of ignorantly walking in the dark, the two types of people (he that *fears the LORD* and he that walks *in the light of his own fire*) are remarkably different from each other. And their basic differences are found in how each type of person approaches the first two of the three things a person can control:

1. Who They Trust
2. Their Perspective

The third thing a person can control is their actions, it flows downstream from the first two things. Isaiah does not go into detail about the actions of each person, but he does describe the first two: trust and perspective.

## **The First Type of Person: He Who Feels the LORD but Walks in Darkness with No Light**

The first type of person is described in verse 10. This verse is in the form of a question followed by an answer. The question is:

*Who is among you that fears the LORD,  
That obeys the voice of His servant,  
That walks in darkness and has no light? (v 10).*

The answer to this question is:

*Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God (v 10).*

The question begins: *Who is among you that fears the LORD?*

Someone *who fears the LORD* is someone who gives more weight to trusting what *God* says than to what anyone else says. As a result, the one who *fears the LORD* attempts to live (i.e. *walk*) in such a way as to please Him. The—*you*—in this verse refers to the listeners of this *Servant Song*/readers of Isaiah's prophecies. This question is a call for anyone and all *among you* who are *God-fearing* people.

The next phrase describes people/a person *who fears the LORD*.

A person *that fears the LORD* obeys the voice of His servant.

*His servant* refers to the Messiah, who is the person that has been describing Himself throughout this *Servant Song* (Isaiah 50:4-9). This verse infers that obeying the *voice of His servant* is a way to exercise *fear of the LORD*. This is because the *servant* speaks for *God*.

The general context of this *Servant Song* would suggest that the *servant* referred to here is the Messiah. Accordingly, this is an Old Testament glimpse that the Messiah would be *God* in human flesh (Colossians 1:16-17). However, the immediate context of the question and answer of this verse indicates that the *servant* here refers to someone else. And this is likely why the translators opted to translate the word *servant* with a lowercase "s" instead of a capital "S."

In the immediate context the term *His servant* likely refers to Moses. Moses was the *servant of the LORD* who led Israel out of bondage in Egypt and who delivered *God's* commandments and instructions to His people. Moses is explicitly called by *the LORD* "My servant" or described as the "the servant of the LORD" more than any other figure in the Old Testament (Exodus 14:31, Numbers 12:7, 8, Deuteronomy 34:5, Joshua 1:1, 2, 15, 8:31, 33, 11:12, 15, 12:6, 13:8, 14:7, 18:7, 22:2, 1 Kings 8:53, 56, 2 Kings 18:12, 21:8, 1 Chronicles 6:49, 2 Chronicles 1:3, 24:6, 9, Nehemiah 1:7, 9:14, 10:29, Daniel 9:11, Malachi 4:4).

What this expression appears to be saying is a person *that fears the LORD* is a person who *obeys the voice of His servant*, Moses. In other words, people *who fear the LORD* will *obey the teachings of Moses and God's law* which was given through Moses, *His servant*.

And yet, even God-fearing people who wish to please the LORD and who have the Law of Moses still walk *in darkness* (ignorance of what *God* wants them to do) *and have no light* (understanding). They fail to fulfill the Law or understand its ultimate purpose.

Isaiah's solution for the man *who fears the LORD but walks in darkness and has no light* is for *him to trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God*. By this, Isaiah means for this person to trust in the Messiah—the true Servant whom Moses prophesied would come in Deuteronomy 18:

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.”  
(Deuteronomy 18:15)

“I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.”  
(Deuteronomy 18:18)

In the context of this prophecy from Deuteronomy 18:18, the people fear hearing the voice of *God* on Mount Sinai, and ask that Moses speak to them instead, that they might not die. *God* said their request was good, so He would raise up a prophet like Moses who could speak *God's* word to them directly. Jesus was that prophet; He was *God* in human form, who could speak person-to-person, that they might hear without being afraid. Sadly, most people did not recognize His visitation, and did not heed His words.

Moses was “the [lowercase] servant of the LORD.” But Jesus the Messiah is “The [uppercase] Servant of the LORD.” Moses was a type of Him who was to come. Jesus can be considered as the Second Moses. As the Apostle John writes, “the law was given through Moses” but “grace and truth were realized [literally came into being] through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Moses was the prefiguring foreshadow of Jesus, the true Servant and Messiah.

When Jesus the Messiah came to earth the first time, He spoke the true meaning and fulfillment of Moses's law (Matthew 5:17). He was and is the ultimate authority on Moses's teachings, because He was both God and the Messiah (Matthew 7:28-29). Jesus clarified and fulfilled the law of Moses in His teachings and life. Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and His lived example of serving others and laying down His life for them give us great *light* (understanding) into how we are to live.

Interestingly, when we walk obediently in the spirit of Christ, we too can fulfill the Law (Romans 8:4, Galatians 5:13-14).

Matthew introduces Jesus's ministry with a thematically similar quote from Isaiah 9:1-2. Citing Isaiah, Matthew writes how when Jesus the Messiah began to proclaim the kingdom:

“The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light,  
And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death,

Upon them a Light dawned."  
(Matthew 4:16)

Because of Jesus the Messiah, we do not have to continue walking *in darkness* (moral ignorance). Because of Jesus we have a perfect image of what it looks like to follow God as a human. We can and are to emulate and follow Jesus's example (Philippians 2:5, Hebrews 12:1-2).

This is Isaiah's answer to his question: "*Who is among you that fears the LORD, that follows the Law of Moses, His servant, and walks in darkness and has no light?*" (v 10): Look to the Messiah. *Trust in His name—the name of the LORD* (v 10). Follow His example which was to *rely on God* for all the things He said and did.

The person *who fears the LORD* but *walks in darkness with no light* will be given *light* (v 10)—  
"The Light of the world!" (John 8:12; See also: John 1:4-5, 9),

"Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.'"  
(John 8:12)

Isaiah's words: *Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God* (v 10), is great comfort to those *who fear the LORD* but *have no light*. It is also sound advice. The inference is that those who walk by faith in God with whatever *light* He has revealed to them (i.e. whatever *light* they have), will be given more *light*. Further, the inference is that faith is the foundation for knowledge.

Jesus the Messiah said something similar to this in His Sermon on the Mount, "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22).

Before moving to the second type of person *who walks in darkness*, we must point out a prophetic irony in how the Messiah's enemies rephrased Isaiah's counsel when they crucified Him.

The religious leaders, the chief priests (Sadducees), scribes and elders (Pharisees) who condemned Jesus the Messiah to death, mocked Him with these words from Isaiah as He was dying for them on the cross,

"He trusts in God; Let God rescue Him."  
(Matthew 27:43)

They viciously and wrongly presumed that Jesus was not the Messiah. But the Lord GOD vindicated Jesus (Isaiah 50:8) when He raised Him from the dead. And as Isaiah previously prophesied: "he who condemns Me [the Messiah] will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them" (Isaiah 50:9).

## The Second Type of Person: He Who Walks in the Light of His Own Fire

Isaiah concludes this third Servant Song with a warning to those *who* do not fear or *rely* upon *the LORD*, but who instead *rely* upon their own understanding. This is the second type of person *who walks in darkness*. The first type fears God and gains *light*. This second kind does the opposite.

Isaiah pleads for their attention with the word *Behold*.

He then describes this person by means of a multi-layered metaphor,

*Behold, all you who kindle a fire,  
Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,  
Walk in the light of your fire  
And among the brands you have set ablaze (v 11).*

*Fire* is the main image of this metaphor. *Fire* gives *light* and heat. This applies to one of the metaphor's meanings. But *fire* is commonly used in the Bible as a metaphor for God's judgment. This is another way this verse can be understood. Both are likely valid and intended understandings of this passage.

We will first consider the implications of this passage of fire as a metaphor for *light*.

As *fire* is a metaphor for human knowledge, when Isaiah says *all you who kindle a fire*, he is describing people *who* act as if they can understand the meaning of life based on their own limited wisdom. They live in *darkness*, but rather than seek *light* and illumination from *the LORD*, they seek to manufacture their own *fire light*.

They *trust* that their *fire* of human reason and experience will illuminate reality to the point where they can understand all that they need or desire to know. They don't *fear* or need *God*, because they believe they are sufficient in themselves. They are their own *God*. It is the Garden of Eden and Tower of Babel all over again (Genesis 3:1-7, Genesis 11:1-9). They are like those described in Ecclesiastes that chase after the wind; their pursuit is folly, vanity, and will lead to madness ([see our commentary on Ecclesiastes 12:8](#)).

These people are similar to those whom Jesus the Messiah described in His Sermon on the Mount, "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:22).

Isaiah continues to describe these people as those *who encircle yourselves with firebrands*, and

*walk in the light of your fire and the brands you have set ablaze*. The image may be of someone who builds a large fire, then finds themselves surrounded by it. What they intended for their benefit now threatens to destroy them.

The Hebrew word translated as *firebrands* is *זִיקָוּת* (H2131—pronounced: "zee-kaw"). It can also mean "sparks." The picture could also be of someone trying to *walk* around in the dark by the

*light* of sparks, which is futile. Sparks produce minimal *light*, give off little heat, and are extremely short lived—far too short to provide any meaningful illumination. But the image Isaiah may be portraying is that some people *who walk in darkness* result in living in great folly. They think and act as though they are very wise. They *walk* by the *light* of their own wisdom, intelligence, philosophy, religious system, or science. But while they are wise in their own eyes, they are really blind fools trying to get around in the dark on spark-*light*.

Both images are applicable. As emphasized in Ecclesiastes, trying to solve the meaning of life through human reason and experience leads to madness, which is self-destruction, like a large fire. It also leads to folly and vanity, making our labors meaningless, like trying to light the night with sparks. Such people are wise in their own eyes, but do not have any true wisdom. True wisdom begins with the fear *of the LORD* (Proverbs 9:10). They do not *trust in the LORD* with all their heart, because they *rely on* their own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).

Human knowledge is an inadequate foundation to understand meaning and purpose. We simply do not have an adequate perspective to discover our true best interest. Human knowledge and experience is a poor and inadequate substitute for *God's* wisdom and understanding. It is like comparing a fading spark to the brilliance of the noon sun.

Isaiah's description of these people *who walk by the light of their own fire* aligns with Jesus the Messiah's description of the Pharisees as blind guides leading the blind (Matthew 15:14).

*Fire* is also a metaphor for God's judgment. And this metaphor seems to apply to Isaiah's closing lines of this *Servant Song*.

As people trust and walk in the light of their own fires and reject God and His Messiah, they sow fiery judgment for themselves.

As they reject *the LORD* and *His Servant*, they are encircling themselves *with firebrands* and will *walk among the brands* they themselves *have set ablaze*.

They will be burned by their own *fire* as *God's* wrath gives them over to face the consequences of their sin.

The final lines of this song speak of judgement and warn against relying on oneself and rejecting *God*,

*This you will have from My hand:  
You will lie down in torment (v 11).*

The consequences of rejecting the LORD's Messiah and relying upon oneself is that *you will lie down in torment*. The wages of sin is death. Death is separation. The consequences of not believing in Jesus is separation from God's family. The consequence for anyone who walks in unrighteousness and does not believe in Jesus as the Messiah is fiery judgment and *torment* of eternal separation from being in God's family. However, for any person, including a believer in Jesus, sin has consequences.

Jesus saves/delivers those who believe in Him from the penalty of sin without condition (John 3:14-15). But when believers sin, they can still expect to experience the cause-effect of God's moral universe, just as surely as they would expect to experience the cause-effect of God's physical universe. Romans describes this as a progression of God giving us over to the natural consequences of our own desires (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

God did not send *His Servant* and Son into the world to judge it, but to save it (John 3:17). But those who do not believe His Servant and Son are condemned for their rejection of Him (John 3:18),

“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”  
(John 3:19-20)

Isaiah's counsel to the man *who fears the LORD but walks in darkness and has no light* of his own equally applies to the man *who is in darkness and walks by the spark-light of his own fire*.

Let *both* types of *men trust in the name of the Lord* (Jesus, the Messiah) *and rely on his God*.

Whosoever does this shall not perish and will have the free gift of eternal life (John 3:16). Whoever gains the free gift and walks in obedience to *the light of God*, walking in the Spirit, will gain not only the gift of life, but also the lived experience and reward of life (Galatians 6:8), partnership with God, and fellowship with one another (1 John 1:3, 7).

To see the commentary for the beginning of the Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) [click here](#).

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>10</sup> Who is among you that fears the LORD,  
That obeys the voice of His servant,  
That walks in darkness and has no light?  
Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.**  
**<sup>11</sup> Behold, all you who kindle a fire,  
Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,  
Walk in the light of your fire  
And among the brands you have set ablaze.  
This you will have from My hand:  
You will lie down in torment.**