

Isaiah 50:8-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/isa/isa-50/isaiah-508-9/>

The Servant is able to trust and obey God through hardships, because the Lord is near Him and the Lord will vindicate Him. The Servant challenges anyone who does not believe His true identity to stand up to argue against Him in court with God as the judge. God will decide in the Servant's favor and the arguments of the unbelievers will wear out like a moth-eaten garment that is riddled with holes.

The third Servant Song of Isaiah 50:4-11 continues in the voice of the Servant.

Previously in this Servant Song, the Servant has described how He will be beaten and mocked as He obeys *the Lord GOD* (Isaiah 50:5-6). The Servant was determined to follow the *Lord GOD* because He trusted *the Lord*, and despite the humiliation at the hands of His enemies, He knew He would not be ashamed in His sight.

The Servant then defends His previous assertion: “And I know that I will not be ashamed” (Isaiah 50:7b).

The first reason the Servant knows this is because:

He who vindicates Me is near (v8).

The Servant understands that *the Lord GOD* is *He who vindicates*. *The Lord GOD* says: “Vengeance is Mine” (Deuteronomy 32:35). It is not for the Messiah, or anyone else, to make things right for Himself/themselves (Leviticus 19:18). The Servant need not worry about seeking justice for Himself, “For the LORD will vindicate His people, and will have compassion on His servants” (Deuteronomy 32:36).

The same is true for us whenever we follow the LORD,

“The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.”
(Exodus 14:14).

“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”
(Romans 12:17-19)

The Servant also understands that *the Lord God is near* beside Him.

There is a double meaning in the word *near*. The first meaning is that *the Lord GOD is near* in proximity. This is true because *the Lord GOD is everywhere*.

The Servant understands what the Psalmist muses when he puts forth the question:

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?”
(Psalm 139:7)

The Psalmist responds correctly to his own question,

“If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.”
(Psalm 139:8-10)

In other words, there is no where a person can go or be that *the Lord GOD* is not present and near to him. This the Servant believes.

But the Servant also understands that *the Lord GOD* is not only physically *near* Him in proximity, but *the Lord GOD* is also *near* Him in relationship. They are united in Spirit. They share an intimate relationship and are of the same heart and mind. They have the same goal. The Servant is not alone. The Servant is freely performing the task of suffering on behalf of His people and the world according to the will of *the Lord GOD*.

It was for this shared purpose that the Servant came: to have the “tongue of disciples” and teach what *the Lord GOD* gave Him (Isaiah 50:4); and to obey His calling even in suffering (Isaiah 50:5-6).

Because *the Lord GOD* is *He who vindicates*, and the Servant *is near* Him in proximity and purpose, the Servant has every reason to be confident.

The Servant then issues two challenges. The first challenge is:

Who will contend with Me?
Let us stand up to each other (v 8).

To *contend with* means to publicly call out, contest, or accuse—especially in a *case* of legal dispute. The reason someone might *contend with* the Servant is to claim that He is wrong about who He is, His mission, or His obedience to *the Lord GOD*. In other words, the question: “*Who will contend with Me?*” appears to be asking: “*Who will contend that I am not the Messiah sent by the Lord GOD?*”

The reason someone would contend with the Servant, arguing that He is not the Messiah, is because it will not be apparent to them that He is. This infers the reality of what took place

during Jesus's ministry: Jesus did not live up to the expectations of His people, so they chose not to receive Him.

Isaiah repeatedly prophesies about the Messiah's obscurity in the fourth Servant Song,

“Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”
(Isaiah 53:1)

“[He had no] appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
He was despised and forsaken of men.”
(Isaiah 53:2-3a)

“Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.”
(Isaiah 53:4b)

But although the Servant did not fit the people's expectations of what the Messiah would look like, that did not mean that He was not the Messiah sent by *the Lord GOD*. This prophecy predicts that Israel will, in fact, misunderstand Jesus's identity.

The Servant challenges those who contend with Him about His identity to put it to the test: *Let us stand up to each other* and present the evidence we have for our claims. You (My accuser) *stand up* and give evidence that I am not the Messiah. And I will *stand up* and give evidence that I am the Messiah. And we will let *the Lord GOD* be the Judge who presides over this *case*.

The second challenge the Servant makes is simply a reissue of the first one,

Who has a case against Me?
Let him draw near to Me (v 8).

It is interesting that even in Jesus's day, He challenged His opponents with the evidence He had presented, giving them no basis for a *case* against Him (John 10:25, 37-38).

The Servant then proceeds to what the verdict of this *case* will be,

Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me (v 9).

The word, *Behold*, means: “Pay attention.” During a trial, the most intense moment is usually when the judge states the verdict or decision of the *case*.

Behold, the Lord GOD decides in favor of the Servant. This is what the Servant means in this *case* when He says: *the Lord GOD helps Me*. *The Lord GOD* judges that the Servant is in fact the Messiah that *He* sent.

After *the Lord GOD* issues the verdict which *helps* the Servant's *case*, the Servant makes a boastful taunt: *Who is he who condemns Me?*

This rhetorical question has the expected answer: "No one." After the Lord GOD has spoken and vindicated the Servant and His Messianic identity, there is no one who condemns Him justly—even Pilate who sentenced Him to death declared Jesus innocent (John 19:6). We can expect also that history will completely validate all that is true about Jesus.

All of these things are true of Jesus the Messiah.

Jesus, the Messiah, knew that the Lord GOD was near Him, both in proximity and in purpose. Hours before His arrest and execution, Jesus prayed to His Father revealing their intimate relationship and unity of purpose:

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."
(John 17:4-5)

Jesus, the Messiah, trusted the Lord GOD to vindicate Him. At His arrest, He told Peter:

"Put your sword back into its place...do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"
(Matthew 26:52-53)

Jesus knew *the Lord GOD* would demonstrate that He was the Messiah for all to see in His own good timing. And that in the end:

"Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted."
(Isaiah 52:13)

"At the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
(Philippians 2:10-11)

The Servant's accusers will vanish.

*Behold, they will all wear out like a garment;
The moth will eat them (v 9).*

This metaphor is saying *all* arguments which *contend against* the Servant *will thin and wear out* like a threadbare *garment*. *All* arguments which *contend against* Him will be riddled with holes as though a *moth* had eaten *them*.

The expression: *the moth will eat them*, also suggests that all it will take is patience and time for *the Lord GOD's vindication* to come to light. The holes in their arguments against the Servant's Messianic identity will invisibly grow with the passing of time until suddenly they are worn out and worthless. The Servant *will* be vindicated without ever having to offer even the slightest rebuttal.

Biblical Text

**⁸ He who vindicates Me is near;
Who will contend with Me?
Let us stand up to each other;
Who has a case against Me?
Let him draw near to Me.
⁹ Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me;
Who is he who condemns Me?
Behold, they will all wear out like a garment;
The moth will eat them.**