

The Servant of Isaiah

LESSON ONE

There are four servant passages in Isaiah (Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13 - 53:12).

Servant is used of three different entities in the Book of Isaiah.

1. Individuals
 - a. Isaiah - Isaiah 20:3
 - b. Eliakim - Isaiah 22:20
 - c. David - Isaiah 37:35
2. Israel

Isaiah 41:8-9; 44:1,21; 45:4; 48:20
3. Messiah

The four servant passages mentioned above
4. There is a contrast in Isaiah between Israel the servant and Messiah the Servant
 - a. Israel the servant is sinful and corrupt (1:4), blind (29:10) and unrighteous (48:1).
 - b. Messiah the Servant is perfect (53:9b), gives sight to the blind (42:7), and is righteous (53:11).
5. The first two servant passages tell us **what** the servant will do.
The last two servant passages tell us **how** the servant will do it.

The background and the content:

Isaiah 40:1-11	" <i>behold your God</i> "
Isaiah 40:12-31	Addressing the Jewish people
Isaiah 41:1-7	Addressing the Gentile people
Isaiah 41:8-19	Israel, God's apologetic to the world
Isaiah 41:20-23	Present your defense of your God
Isaiah 41:24-29	One is coming with good news

LESSON TWO

The First Servant Passage

Isaiah 42:1-7

- 1 *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*
- 2 *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.*
- 3 *A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.*
- 4 *He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.*
- 5 *Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:*
- 6 *I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;*
- 7 *To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.*

SUMMARY

1. He is God's elect – Messiah - and the Spirit of God is on Him (Isaiah 61:1-2) – vs. 1
2. The Servant is an individual - "he"; "him" – vs. 1-2
3. He has not come to destroy but to set a standard of justice in the world by which people will be judged – vs. 3-4.
4. God reminds all that He is the Creator and God of this universe and is to be obeyed – vs. 5.
5. The servant is given to the Jewish people - vs. 6.
6. The servant is a light to the Gentiles - vs. 6.
7. The servant will deliver people from spiritual blindness and bondage – vs. 7

LESSON THREE

The Second Servant Passage

Isaiah 49:1-7

This chapter brings us to the second of the servant passages (the first in 42:1-7). After nine chapters (40-48) mainly focusing on God's power, His ability to predict the future, and the condemnation of idols, we are now reminded that God will deliver His people Israel, as well as the Gentiles, from their sinfulness and idolatry. This will be accomplished through God's servant and is the main theme for the next 5 chapters.

It is important to establish who is speaking in chapter 49. To do this we need to identify the speaker up to this point as it is the same speaker in chapter 49. The speaker in Isaiah 48:12-22 is "the LORD."

12 *Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.*
13 *Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.*
14 *All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.*
15 *I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.*
16 *Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.*
17 *Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.*
18 *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:*
19 *Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.*
20 *Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.*
21 *And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.*
22 *There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.*

1 *Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.*
2 *And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;*
3 *And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*
4 *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.*
5 *And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.*
6 *And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*
7 *Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.*

Notice, in chapter 49 the speaker doesn't change! It is still "the LORD."

The One we identified as the speaker in chapter 48:12-17 is still speaking in this chapter.

In these 7 verses there is a conversation between God the Father and God the Redeemer (Son):

Vs. 1-2 **God the Son is speaking**
Vs. 3 **God the Father is speaking**
Vs. 4-5 **God the Son is speaking**
Vs. 6 **God the Father is speaking**
Vs. 7 **Isaiah speaks and identifies God the Father and God the Son as speaking.**

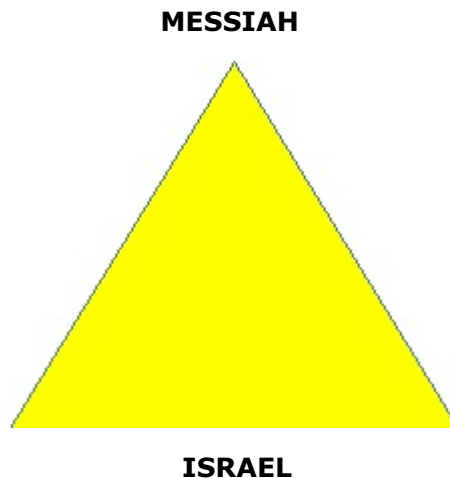
Isaiah 49:3 identifying the servant as Israel is the major argument of the anti-missionaries on why Jesus isn't the servant of Isaiah, since it clearly says Israel is the servant. The class on "Isaiah 53" in the Jewish Evangelism course answers this in detail.

For the purpose of this class, and lesson, suffice it to say the servant should be viewed as the Messiah embodying the call and purpose of the nation of Israel to be a "kingdom of priests." In essence "Israel" in this verse is a name for Messiah. Consider Exodus 19 and the call of Israel.

Exodus 19:3-6

- 3 *And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;*
- 4 *Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.*
- 5 *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:*
- 6 *And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

Messiah accomplishes through his perfect obedience
what the (sinful) nation of Israel could not – be a priest (Psalm 110:4)



"The fates of Israel and the Messiah seem to coincide to such a degree that it is often impossible to distinguish the one from the other. Matthew reveals the same outlook when he identifies the fate of the whole of Israel with that of the child-Messiah. Edersheim is specially emphatic on the question of identification, and speaks of the Messiah as the Representative Israelite; in other words, Messiah is Israel par excellence. In the life and experience of the Messiah is Israel's history re-enacted, but with a difference. Where Israel failed, the Messiah succeeds; what Israel was meant to be, the Messiah is - the perfect Servant of God." Jakob Jocz, *A Theology of Election: Israel and the Church*, S.P.C.K., 1958, p. 106

SUMMARY

1. He is called from the womb by God and is a man - vs. 1
2. He is God's Servant and is called Israel, a name for Messiah – vs. 3
3. God has raised the servant up to redeem Jacob (Israel) and the Gentiles - vs. 4-5

LESSON FOUR

This is the 3rd servant passage of Isaiah. The speaker has not changed from the One we identified as the speaker starting in Isaiah 48:12 (the LORD the redeemer, Messiah, Son of God). This passage shows the humanity of the servant (he has a back, cheeks, face, hair) and yet the speaker is still Jehovah. The first two servant passages tell what the servant will do and the final two servant passages tell us how he will do it.

Isaiah 48:12-22 Jehovah, the Redeemer, is the speaker

Isaiah 49:1-6 Conversation between Jehovah, the Lord God, and Jehovah the Redeemer

Isaiah 49:7-12 Isaiah speaks in verse 7 and then Jehovah speaks again in verses 8-12 deal with the results of the servant's work for Israel and the world detailed.

Isaiah 49:13-14 God comforts Israel but Israel's concern is that God has forsaken her.

Isaiah 49:15-26 Jehovah answers Israel's concern that He has forgotten her in three different ways:

Isaiah 49:15-23 **The first argument** is just as a woman can't forget her infant child, so God can't forget Israel. He has also engraved them on his hands so he can't ever forget. God's love is greater than even the natural love of a mother for her infant child.

Isaiah 49:24-26 **The second argument** is that even though mighty and powerful nations can't have their spoils of war taken from them because of their power, God is more powerful than any and all the armies of the world and will deliver Israel and destroy her enemies.

Isaiah 50:1-3 **The third argument** of why God has not, and will not, forsake Israel are the first three verses of chapter 50. God has temporarily disciplined Israel because of her sin but has not divorced her nor sold her to creditors. He who created the heavens, has the power to change nature, has the power to deliver and redeem Israel.

What should be noticed in Isaiah 48:12 through 50:3 is that the speaker is the same. The speaker is Jehovah.

LESSON FIVE

Isaiah 50:4-11 is the 3rd servant passage of Isaiah. The speaker has not changed from the One we identified as the speaker starting in Isaiah 48:12 (the LORD the redeemer, Messiah, Son of God).

This passage shows the humanity of the servant (he has a back, cheeks, face, hair) and yet the speaker is still Jehovah.

Four times in verses 4-9 "Lord GOD," אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה, *adonai Yahweh*, is used showing that God is orchestrating the events.

- 4 *The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.*
- 5 *The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.*
- 6 *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*
- 7 *For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.*
- 8 *He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.*
- 9 *Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.*
- 10 *Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.*
- 11 *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

Rabbi Max Wertheimer:

"I decided that I must resign and take time to think things through. I was perplexed about one thing in particular: Where was the spirit and soul of my loved one who had made my existence so sweet? What had become of all her faculties, the intents and purposes of that active, keen mind? I turned to the Bible for an answer.

"Again I studied Judaism, but it answered no questions; it satisfied no craving in my heart. Then I began to read the New Testament, comparing it with the Old. As I pondered over and meditated on many passages, one in particular made a definite impression. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, I was perplexed by the expression, ". . . My righteous servant," found in the eleventh verse. This was the only mention of that phrase I could find in either Testament. We have, "David, my servant," "Isaiah, my servant," Daniel, my servant," but here it is, "My righteous servant."

"I said to myself, Who is that righteous servant? To whom does the prophet refer? I argued, Whoever that "righteous servant" of Jehovah is, of one thing I am sure: He is not Israel, because the prophet declares Israel to be a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a leprous nation. The righteous servant of Jehovah must be one who is holy. If it isn't Israel, who could it be? I decided it must be Isaiah. But in Isaiah chapter 6 I found it could never be the prophet, for he confesses himself to be a guilty sinner and a man of unclean lips in God's sight. "My righteous servant." Who could it be?

"I began to study the context and in Isaiah 50:6 I found, "I offered my back to those who beat me." Then I read how the chapter began: "This is what the Lord says." I asked, Does God have a back? Did he give it to those who beat him? Then I read, "My cheeks to those who pulled out my beard," and how he did not hide his face "from mocking and spitting." I asked myself, When did Jehovah have these human characteristics? When and why did he suffer these indignities?"

SUMMARY

1. "Me", "mine," "my", "I" is the speaker who we have identified as Jehovah and the speaker is the servant.
2. He (Jehovah) has a face, cheeks, a back, and ears – Isaiah 50: 6.
3. In this section we see the introduction of the **HOW** of what the servant will do – i.e. the physical suffering of the servant.

LESSON SIX

The first two servant passages tell us that the servant will bring spiritual redemption to both Jew and Gentile.

The fourth servant passage continues the **HOW** of what the servant will do. It is not just physical suffering, but spiritual suffering that brings redemption to Jew and Gentile.

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

52:13 *Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.*

14 *As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:*

15 *So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.*

"Sprinkle" is a technical word found in the Mosaic Law for sprinkling blood, oil, or water (Lev. 4:6; 8:11; 14:7).

The purpose of sprinkling was to obtain ritual purity and the priest who did the sprinkling had to be pure.

The servant will cleanse the nations (Gentiles).

53:1 *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*

2 *For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

3 ***He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.***

4 *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

5 ***But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.***

6 ***All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

7 *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

8 ***He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.***

9 ***And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.***

10 ***Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.***

11 *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

12 ***Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.***

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 53

The **HOW** of this chapter is both the physical and, most importantly, the spiritual suffering of the servant for the sins of the nations and Israel (Gentiles and Jews).

The servant, as consistently seen throughout the 4 servant passages is a man (not the nation Israel) who would pay the sin penalty for Jew and Gentile through his death, burial and resurrection.