



# Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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# The Mission of the LORD's Servant (49:1-13)

- Last week we began covering 49:1-13 and got as far as **verse 8**.
- You'll remember that I divided the text as follows:
  - **49:1-6** – The Servant Speaks of His ***Two-Fold*** Task to:
    - Restore ***Israel***
    - Bring Salvation to the ***World***
  - **49:7-13** – Two Further Oracles Concerning the Servant:
    - **49:7** – *This is what the LORD... says...*
    - **49:8-13** – *This is what the LORD says...*

# Summary of What We Covered Last Week

- We saw last week that Isaiah 49:1-13 is the beginning of a *new* section of the book of Isaiah (chapters 49-55) where the focus:
  - Shifts *away* from the *physical deliverance* of Israel from *Babylonian captivity* by Cyrus that was the focus of chapters 40-48
  - And instead shifts *towards* the *spiritual deliverance* of Israel *and* the nations of the world from their *bondage to sin* by the LORD's "*servant*", who we know to be Jesus.

# Summary of What We Covered Last Week

- In 49:1-6 the “*servant*” speaks, *not just* to Israel, but the *entire world* – “*Listen to me, you coastlands! Pay attention, you people who live far away!*” (49:1).
- He tells us he has been “*summoned... from birth... commissioned... when [his] mother brought [him] into the world*” (49:1) – so his task was no afterthought.
- Like a “*sharp sword*” or a “*sharpened arrow*” (49:2) he will accomplish *exactly* what God wants at the appointed time.
- Even though his servanthood *at first* seems futile: “*But I thought, ‘I have worked in vain’*” (49:4), he knows that *ultimately* God will not fail him: “*But the LORD will vindicate me; my God will reward me.*” (49:4)

# Summary of What We Covered Last Week

- While the *nation of Israel* is often called the LORD's "*servant*" in chapters 40-48 (41:8-9; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 48:20), *the "servant"* is actually called "*Israel*" in 49:3 because he is the *ideal* Israel – what the nation *should* have been, but never *could* be.
- *The "servant"* was formed from birth to "*to restore Jacob to himself, so that Israel might be gathered to him*" (49:5)
- And not only that, but the LORD will make the "*servant... a light to the nations, so you can bring my deliverance to the remote regions of the earth*" (49:6)

# Summary of What We Covered Last Week

- We then examined the first *oracle* in 49:7 where the LORD speaks *directly to* the “*servant*” and tells him:
  - He will “*despised and rejected*” by “*the nation*” [singular] of Israel, but “*kings*” and “*princes*” from *other* nations will *honor* him.
  - And though “*kings will see [the servant] and rise in respect*” and “*princes will bow down*” to him, he is said to be a “*servant of rulers*”, because he will serve them by dying for their sins, as we will see later when we cover **Isaiah 53:4-9**.

# Summary of What We Covered Last Week

- We then began looking at the first two verses of the *second oracle* in 49:8-9a where the LORD assures the servant that his mission will be successfully accomplished *with divine assistance*:  
“*I will help you... I will protect you*” (49:8).
- Furthermore we saw that this future time when the LORD will “*protect*” the servant and “*help*” him accomplish his mission is referred to here as the:
  - “*time*” when the LORD will “*show [his] favor*” (49:8)
  - “*day of deliverance*” which could *also* be translated “*day of salvation*” (49:8)

# Summary of What We Covered Last Week

- We then saw that this *same* future time period is described *again* a little *later* in the book of Isaiah (61:1-2) where we see much of the same wording that we saw in 49:8-9 (with some minor differences).
- We then raised the question: *when is* this future time period (this time of the LORD's favor, this day of salvation) that is being described here?
- And we saw that, at *one level*, in the *immediate* context of Isaiah, it is referring to that future time when the Israelites would be freed from Babylonian exile and restored to their land in Palestine.



# Summary of What We Covered Last Week

- But then we also saw at least *two* New Testament passages (Luke 4:16-21; 2 Cor 6:2) that show us that the *ultimate* fulfillment of this day of the LORD's favor is during the *New Testament age*, beginning with Jesus' ministry.
- And so, as we continue to work our way through this second oracle (49:8-13) we will see many descriptions given of what the "*servant*" will do for the nation of Israel on the "*day of deliverance*" when he delivers them from the Babylonian captivity.
- But just as we saw in the *first* portion of this text, the *physical* descriptions given in this section are *ultimately* fulfilled *spiritually* by what the servant will do in delivering Israel *and the nations* from their bondage to sin during the New Testament era.

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

*49:8 This is what the LORD says: "At the time I decide to show my favor, I will respond to you; in the day of deliverance I will help you; I will protect you and make you a covenant mediator for people, to rebuild the land and to reassign the desolate property. <sup>9a</sup> You will say to the prisoners, 'Come out,' and to those who are in dark dungeons, 'Emerge.'*

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

*49:9b They will graze beside the roads; on all the slopes they will find pasture.<sup>10</sup> They will not be hungry or thirsty; the sun's oppressive heat will not beat down on them, for one who has compassion on them will guide them; he will lead them to springs of water.<sup>11</sup> I will make all my mountains into a road; I will construct my roadways."*

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

*49:12 Look, they come from far away! Look, some come from the north and west, and others from the land of Sinim. <sup>13</sup> Shout for joy, O sky! Rejoice, O earth! Let the mountains give a joyful shout! For the LORD consoles his people and shows compassion to the oppressed.*

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- As we continue examining this second oracle, we see that during that future “*day of deliverance*” the LORD will appoint the Servant for a series of tasks, the first of which is to serve as a “*a covenant mediator for people*” (49:8).
- We saw this *very same expression* back in chapter 42 where Isaiah introduced the servant for the very first time:
  - *I, the LORD, officially commission you [the servant]; I take hold of your hand. I protect you and **make you a covenant mediator for people** and a light to the nations, <sup>7</sup> to open blind eyes, to release prisoners from dungeons, those who live in darkness from prisons.* (Isaiah 42:6-7).

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- In fact there are a *number* of parallel ideas between these two texts:

Isaiah 49:1-13	Isaiah 42:6-7
The servant will be a <i>covenant mediator for people</i> (49:8)	The servant will be a <i>covenant mediator for people</i> (42:6)
The LORD will <i>protect</i> the servant (49:8)	The LORD will <i>protect</i> the servant (42:6)
The servant <i>will say to the prisoners, 'Come out,' and to those who are in dark dungeons, 'Emerge.'</i> (49:9)	The servant will <i>release prisoners from dungeons, those who live in darkness from prisons.</i> (42:7)
The servant will be <i>a light to the nations</i> (49:6)	The servant will be <i>a light to the nations</i> (42:7)

- Clearly *both* of these texts are referencing the same future “*day of salvation*”, which is *ultimately* fulfilled with the coming of Christ in the New Testament.

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- When we examined this expression, “*a covenant mediator for people*” back when we first encountered it in chapter 42, we concluded that this “*covenant*” of which the “*servant*” (i.e., Jesus) serves a mediator is the “*new covenant*” which is prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34.
- And we saw that this is confirmed in the New Testament by the writer of Hebrews:
  - *And so [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the eternal inheritance he has promised. (Heb 9:15)*
  - *But you have come... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks of something better than Abel's does. (Heb 12:22a, 24)*

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- We are told here in 49:8 that, as the “*covenant mediator*”, the Servant will:
  - “*rebuild the land*” (v. 8)
  - “*reassign the desolate property*” (v. 8)
- To “*to rebuild the **land***” *primarily* refers to the “*land*” of Palestine.
- And the parallel expression “*reassign the desolate property*” refers to the *desolation* that has occurred in the land of Palestine while the Jews were exiled in Babylon.
- These lands had *originally* been assigned to the Israelites by lot under Joshua (cf. Josh 13ff).



# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- So, at *one* level, this is a description of the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile to their promised “*land*” in Palestine.
- But *ultimately*, this is describing the *heavenly* “*land*” that all the true seed of Abraham will receive as *their* promised inheritance:
  - *[Abraham and his heirs] all died in faith without receiving the things promised, but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them and acknowledged that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth... they aspire to a better land, that is, a heavenly one.*  
(Heb 11:13,16)

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- Before they can be reassigned to this currently “*desolate property*” and enjoy this “*land*” which the servant will “*rebuild*”, they must **first** hear the commanding and enabling word of the Servant **releasing** them from their current **bondage**:
  - *[the servant] will say to the prisoners, ‘Come out,’ and to those who are in dark dungeons, ‘Emerge.’*  
(49:9)
- On **one** level, this refers to the release of the **Israelites** who have been imprisoned in their **Babylonian captivity**.
- **Ultimately**, this is a description of how **all** of **true spiritual Israel** (both Jews and Gentiles) in their inner helplessness, must hear the commanding and enabling word of the Servant releasing them from **bondage to sin** before they will fit to live in that promised heavenly “*land*”.

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- The “*servant*” will not only provide *release* from captivity (49:9), he will also *protect* the people and ensure they have ample provisions (49:10) and bring them back from *many* places, not just Babylon (49:12).
- Those who return (i.e. “*Come out*”; “*Emerge*”) are pictured as flocks who are abundantly provided for along the way:
  - *They will graze beside the roads; on all the slopes they will find pasture* (v. 9).
  - *he will lead them to springs of water* (v. 10).

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- He will protect them under the harshest of conditions (“*the sun’s oppressive heat*”) as they travel through the hostile, barren hills of the desert.
- The figurative language of verse 11 depicts the *lengths* to which the LORD will go to remove *all obstacles* on the long route home (“*I will make all my mountains into a road; I will construct my roadways*”).
- But the most *startling* aspect of this return from exile is how *far reaching* it is in scope.

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- The exiles come not *only* from *Babylon*, but from *other regions* as well: (“*Look, they come from far away! Look, some come from the north and west, and others from the land of Sinim.*” v. 12)<sup>1</sup>
- The word “*Sinim*” occurs only here and may refer to the southern frontier of ancient Egypt.<sup>1</sup>
- Regardless of the exact locations, the *key* here is that exiles will come from *all points of the compass*.<sup>1</sup>
- The return envisioned here is not *merely* one from Babylon by a handful of Judean exiles.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wegner, Paul D. – *Isaiah An Introduction and Commentary* – Tyndale OT Commentaries

<sup>2</sup> Oswalt, John N.. *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66 (The NIC on the OT)* (p. 299-300).

# The Second Oracle (49:8-13)

- This return involves people from every corner of the earth (see also 43:6; 49:22).<sup>2</sup>
- It is no wonder, then, that the Servant began by calling the *whole world* to listen to him (49:1).<sup>2</sup>
- The return of the Jews from Babylon is only a *foretaste* of a return to God from every tribe, tongue, and nation of the earth.<sup>2</sup>
- The oracle ends with a glorious outburst of praise to the LORD (v. 13).<sup>1</sup>
- The heavens and earth are exhorted to burst into song because “*the LORD consoles his people and shows compassion to the oppressed.*”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wegner, Paul D. – *Isaiah An Introduction and Commentary* – Tyndale OT Commentaries

<sup>2</sup> Oswalt, John N.. *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66 (The NIC on the OT)* (p. 299-300).

# New Testament Citations of Isaiah 49:1-13

- **A Light to the Nations** (Isaiah 49:6 cited in Luke 2:32, 24:47, and Acts 13:47)
- **At That Time, in the Day of Deliverance** (Isaiah 49:8 cited in 2 Cor 6:2)

# A Light to the Nations (i.e. Gentiles)

Isaiah 49:6 *he says, "Is it too insignificant a task for you to be my servant, to reestablish the tribes of Jacob, and restore the remnant of Israel? I will make you a light to the nations, so you can bring my deliverance to the remote regions of the earth."* (NET)

Luke 2:28 *Simeon took [the infant Jesus] in his arms and blessed God, saying,*  
29 *"Now, according to your word, Sovereign Lord, permit your servant to depart in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: 32 a light, for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."* (NET)

Luke 24:44 *Then [Jesus] said to [his disciples in a post resurrection appearance], "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it stands written that the Christ would suffer and would rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things".* (NET)



# A Light to the Nations (i.e. Gentiles)

Isaiah 46:6 *he says, "Is it too insignificant a task for you to be my servant, to reestablish the tribes of Jacob, and restore the remnant of Israel? I will make you a light to the nations, so you can bring my deliverance to the remote regions of the earth."* (NET)

Acts 13:45 *But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they began to contradict what Paul was saying by reviling him. <sup>46</sup> Both Paul and Barnabas replied courageously, "It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have appointed you to be a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"* (NET)

# A Light to the Nations (i.e. Gentiles)

- In Acts 13:45-47, after the apostles first took the Gospel to the Jews who refused to believe, they then turned to the Gentiles, who, according to Isaiah 49:6, are equally included in God's purpose of salvation:
  - *Paul and Barnabas replied courageously, "It was necessary to speak the word of God to you [Jews] first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have appointed you to be a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"*
- As we saw earlier, in Isaiah 49:6 this is part of a statement from the LORD to his "*servant*" who has the task of restoring Israel.
- Isaiah 49:6 goes on to say that the task of restoring Israel is too light an assignment, therefore: "*I [God] will make you [the servant] a light to the nations, so you can bring my deliverance to the remote regions of the earth.*"

# A Light to the Nations (i.e. Gentiles)

- Throughout the book of Acts, **Isaiah 49:6** served to reassure the apostles and first century Christians that their mission to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles was a ***legitimate part*** of God's plan that was foretold in the Old Testament scriptures.
- There is another citation of **Isaiah 49:6** in **Luke 2:32**, where Simeon prophesies that the infant **Jesus** will one day be "*a light, for revelation to the Gentiles*".
- Likewise, in a post resurrection appearance to the disciples, Jesus **himself** alludes to **Isaiah 49:6** when he tells them that the OT scriptures predicted that after his death and resurrection "*repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations*" (**Luke 24:47**)
- And so we see that in the New Testament, the mission of the "***servant***" is fulfilled by **both** by Jesus **and** by his followers.

# At That Time, in the Day of Deliverance

Isaiah 49:8 *This is what the LORD says: "At the time I decide to show my favor, I will respond to you; in the day of deliverance I will help you; I will protect you and make you a covenant mediator for people, to rebuild the land and to reassign the desolate property. <sup>9a</sup> You will say to the prisoners, 'Come out,' and to those who are in dark dungeons, 'Emerge.' (NET)*

2 Cor 6:1-2 *Now because we are fellow workers, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says, "I heard you at the acceptable time, and in the day of salvation I helped you." Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! (NET)*

# At That Time, in the Day of Deliverance

- In this section of 2 Corinthians, Paul is making a defense of his apostleship and his gospel to the Corinthians.
- Paul's purpose in the quoting Isaiah 49:8 here is to support from Scripture what he has said in the previous verse: *"Now because we are fellow workers, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain."*
- Paul understood Jesus to be the "*servant*" of **Isaiah 49:8** and saw himself called into the ministry of this servant.
- Paul is urging the Corinthians to conform their lives to his teaching.
- If they do not obey him, then there is a sense, as with the "*servant*" in **Isaiah 49:4a**, that Paul's efforts would be "*in vain.*"

# At That Time, in the Day of Deliverance

- And just as Isaiah 49:8 prophetically affirmed that God would “*help*” the “*servant*” carry out and make effective his mission, so Paul sees himself corporately identified with the Servant Jesus, who began to fulfill this prophesied mission.
- Thus, as an apostle, Paul continues to fulfill the mission of the Servant, which Jesus had begun.
- The “*acceptable time*” (could also be translated “*favorable time*”) is the time spoken of in Isaiah 49:8 when God shows his favor – “*now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation!*”
- Since the Corinthians are living in this “*day of salvation*” there is an urgency for them to show their gratitude for God’s salvation by leading a way of life that is in accordance with what is expected from the “*saints*” of God and also by receiving him as an apostle and a servant of *the* Servant, Jesus the Messiah.

# Next Time

I plan to look at *another* one of the “*servant*” passages in **Isaiah 50:4-9**. This one talks about: “**The Perseverance of the LORD’s Servant**”.

There are a number references to this text in the New Testament Gospels.

# Class Discussion Time





# Class Discussion Time

- Do you see how this text (like many in Isaiah) has to be understood in “layers”, that is to say:
  - On one level the passage is talking about a more ***immediate physical*** event (i.e. the Israelites being freed from Babylonian captivity and allowed to return to their promised land)
  - Yet that same text is describing, at a ***spiritual level***, a much bigger, more distant future event (i.e. the deliverance of Israel and the distant nations of the earth from bondage to sin and a return of the promised heavenly “land” that was lost in the Fall)?

# Class Discussion Time

- We mentioned again this time, as we did last time, that the focus in the new section of Isaiah shifts from the *physical* deliverance of the nation of Israel by Cyrus to the *spiritual* deliverance of Israel and the world by the Servant.
- We noted last time that the *spiritual deliverance* was, in one sense, *more important*, because without it there can be no lasting physical deliverance.
- In saying this, are we saying that the physical deliverance of the nation was *not* important? Was it important? Why or why not?
- Then, thinking in terms of our own nation – we said last week that the biggest priority for our nation is to see people delivered spiritually from their broken relationship with the LORD through the preaching of the Gospel.
- In saying this, are we saying that the physical deliverance of our nation is *not* important? That it doesn't matter who rules the nation or what kind of laws they make? Why or why not?