

Isaiah Saw His Glory #4
The Ideal Servant
(Is. 42:1-9)

Intro: In our series so far we've seen several pictures of the Christ through the eyes of Isaiah the prophet. Of course, there are common elements to many of the passages we're considering; but each one has its own particular emphasis.

In Is. 7 we saw that the Christ was to be God incarnate who entered the world through a virgin birth.

In Is. 9 we saw that the Christ was to be a great light for those in darkness and despair bringing joy and peace to their lives.

In Is. 11 we saw that the Christ was to be a source universal peace as his kingdom embraced the peoples of all nations and taught them to live in righteousness resulting in harmony with one another.

In these passages we see Jesus as the great king who rules in power over His enemies and brings deliverance to His people.

However, in the second half of Isaiah, the prophet reveals a new name for the Christ. He is called "The Servant of Jehovah". This term reveals the readiness of the Christ to obey God, to humble himself under His rule, and to willingly accomplish His purposes. Isaiah is given four pictures of the servant in what are sometimes called the "servant songs" of Isaiah. The first is found in Isaiah 42 and tells us what God would accomplish through His servant to come.

Isaiah's Portrait of the Ideal Servant

His call to service

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; (Isaiah 42:1)

The ideal servant would be God's servant, i.e. "my servant". This servant would be held by, sustained or upheld by God, showing the deep love and commitment of God for this servant.

This servant would be selected by God to accomplish His purposes; and He would be pleased with Him.

The servant would be anointed with the Spirit (Is. 42:1b) In Hebrew thought this indicated divine selection and endowment to do God's work. In fact, it is from this act that the concept of a "Messiah" or "Christ" originates. For those terms mean "the anointed one".

His manner of service

With meekness

He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. (Isaiah 42:2)

The servant of Jehovah would not excite crowds by passionate angry rhetoric advocating revolution and upheaval; instead he would

influence men by quiet reasoning that appeals to the will and not merely the emotions.

With compassion

A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; (Isaiah 42:3a)

Those in a headstrong quest for power will often simply step over those unable to help them; but the servant would view every person with compassion, treating them with gentleness and offering them encouragement.

With commitment

He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed, until He has established justice in the earth; (Is. 42:3b-4a)

The servant of the Lord was not a quitter when things weren't promising; instead he would overcome all obstacles to achieve the Lord's purposes.

His goal of service

He will bring forth justice to the nations (Is. 42:1c)

and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law." (Isaiah 42:4b)

I.e. God's servant would bring all peoples into conformity with the truth of God.

Later these things are described in different terms:

He would be a covenant to the people

As a light to the nations, He would:

Open blind eyes

Bring prisoners out to the light

Rescue those in darkness

His success in service

God now speaks to the Christ and assures Him of success in His efforts:

Vouchsafed by the power of God

Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk in it, (Is. 42:5)

Vouchsafed by the call of God

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness (Is. 42:6a)

Vouchsafed by help of God

I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you (Is. 42:6b)

Vouchsafed by the appointment of God

And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison. (Is. 42:6c-7)

Vouchsafed by the honor of God

I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. (Is. 42:8)

Vouchsafed by the word of God

Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you." (Is. 42:9).

The Gospel Portrayal of the Christ

We cannot read Isaiah's prophet portrait without thinking of the perfect fulfillment of everything in Jesus.

We see His call by God

Of course we cannot read the first words of Isaiah 42 without thinking of the Father's testimony about Jesus at His baptism and at the beginning of His ministry:

And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17)

We see his meekness

Jesus was totally resistant to worldly methods of gaining popularity. He could have turned his healing ministry into a popularity contest, a public relations cascade that would have ensured that ten of thousands more would follow him. Instead Matthew reports a different approach--that Jesus was living out the meekness of the ideal servant:

And many followed Him, and He healed them all, and warned them not to make Him known, in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, might be fulfilled, saying, "Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, until He leads justice to victory. And in His name the Gentiles will hope." (Matthew 12:15-21)

We see His compassion

He saw the miserable plight of men captured in sin and wanted to teach them.

*And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He *said to His disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:36-38)*

We see His commitment

One only has to spend a few minutes reading the gospels to see how frustrating Jesus' work might have been, how many times he might have looked up to the heavens and said, "It's enough! These people are impossible. I'm coming home!". Yet he didn't give up on them. Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (John 13:1)

We see His mission accomplished

Vouchsafed by the call of God, the help of God, the appointment of God, the honor of God, and the word of God, Jesus did everything that Isaiah said He would do!

He became a Light to a world in darkness. His message reached out to a world in sin and brought sight to the blind and liberty to the captives.

He became Lord to a world in rebellion. His message has reached to every part of the world bringing even those Gentiles who had no knowledge of the true god into a new relationship with Him. Those who lived in idolatry and every evil now “wait expectantly for His law”.

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:5-6)

Jesus is the ideal servant of Isaiah 42! By correlating the prophet’s predictions with the apostle’s testimony we can be sure that He is the true Savior of all mankind!

But why does it matter?

It matters because our world is as much in the grip of Satan as the world that Jesus entered.

We have been victimized by Satan’s noisy ad campaigns and slick P.R. schemes to believe that sin is the way to go, only to realize too late that we were duped and now we are in darkness and bondage to that which we thought would give us joy and peace. And in this case Satan doesn’t let up on you or cut you some slack. He just keeps on pushing you deeper and deeper into the darkness hoping that you will finally give up and never try again to escape his power.

But here’s where the Servant of God comes in:

No slick ads but only His quiet voice that lovingly invites but never forces a decision. No P.R. stunts, but a love that is always ready to teach, but never to demand!

He doesn’t give up on us even if there is only a spark of faith or a hint of strength. Instead he tries to take that little faith and that little strength and grow it into something greater.

And when everyone else has given up on us, He remains committed to rescue us from our sin.

And all that he captured in this simple invitation:

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Conclusion: The servant is still doing His work.