

# Isaiah – Part II

## Segment 1 – Isaiah 40 and 41

Isaiah - Part 1 focused on Isaiah, chapters 1-39. This class will cover Isaiah, chapters 40-66. Some people suggest that the book of Isaiah was written by possibly two different writers. However, New Testament Scriptures do not support this theory. In John 12:37-40, both of two quotes are attributed to Isaiah the prophet. One is a quote from Isaiah 53:1 (Isaiah – Part 2), and one is a quote from Isaiah 6:10 (Isaiah – Part 1). Although Isaiah is one complete book, there are differences between these two sections of the prophecy. In chapters one through 39 are many references to historical events as well as kings of Judah, Israel, and Assyria. In chapters 40 through 66 are no more historical references. The nation of Assyria, which is mentioned 33 times in the first part of Isaiah, is not mentioned again in the book of Isaiah. Chapter 39 ended with Isaiah telling Hezekiah that his sons (descendants) will be carried away to Babylon (Is 39:5-7). Incredible truths about the coming Messiah, the servant of YHWH, and the future heaven and earth are declared with remarkable eloquence and stunning detail.

### **God's Greatness – Israel's Comfort**

Isaiah 40:1 – “Comfort, comfort” This type of dual imperative can be seen at other places in the book of Isaiah (“Awake, awake”-Is 51:9, 17; 52:1; “depart, depart”- Isaiah 52:11; “Go through, go through” – Isaiah 62:10).

Isaiah 40:2

“...her warfare has ended ... her iniquity has been removed... she has received of the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins.” Payment is made – a full restitution.

Isaiah 40:3-8

The voice – “Prepare the way of YHWH...make His paths straight” - (John the Baptist – Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23).

The voice cries “All flesh is as grass” (II Kings 19:26; Psalm 37:2; 103:15; James 1:10-11) – The flower fades, the grass withers, but the word of God stands forever (I Peter 1:24-25).

Isaiah 40:9-11

Good news, good tidings, – is used in Isaiah (Isaiah 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1 – Hebrew, *basar* – to bear news, publish, preach, announce good news. New Testament equivalent is Greek, *euangelizo* – preach the good news, especially of the good news of the gospel of the Messiah and the coming Kingdom of God.)

“The Lord YHWH will come with His arm ruling for Him” (His arm – Isaiah 40:11; 48:14; 53:1; 59:16).

Isaiah 40:12-27

Who is like our God?

Isaiah 40:28-31

He gives strength to those who wait for YHWH.

Isaiah 41:1-7

Coastlands (islands/isles – KJV here and verse 5) represent the nations, possibly the same understanding as the ends of the earth. See parallelism in verse 5 – “Coastlands have seen and are afraid; the ends of the earth tremble.”

Verse 2 – “...has aroused one from the east.” Many commentators suggest this is referring to King Cyrus who will be named in chapter 45; however, this “one” is not named here.

Verse 4 – The point is that Yahweh is the one who has performed and accomplished this.

Verse 7 – The craftsman here is probably describing the making of idols (40:20; 46:5-7).

Isaiah 41:8-10

“Israel, My servant:” The servant of God must be interpreted in the context (Isaiah 20:3 – Isaiah is God’s servant; Isaiah 22:20 – Eliakim is God’s servant; Isaiah 37:35 – David is God’s servant). Here in verse 8 and 9, “My servant” is referring to Israel, Jacob, descendent of Abraham – the nation of Israel.

Isaiah 41:11-16

God will deliver His people, and those who contend with them will be as nothing and non-existent. God is the Redeemer – the holy one of Israel. (This is first time the title “redeemer” is used in Isaiah. See also Is 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16. The only other OT uses of redeemer are Job 19:25; Psalm 19:14; 78:35; Proverbs 23:11; Jeremiah 50:34.)

Isaiah 41:17-20

God will bring deliverance to the afflicted and needy. This transformation of the earth literally will take place in the future, when God creates a new heaven and earth.

Isaiah 41:21-24

Here, Yahweh presents a challenge to the false gods. They are of no account.

Isaiah 41:25-29

God will arouse one from the north. Again, commentators suggest King Cyrus, although again no name is given in this instance as well. This one will come upon the rulers as “the potter treads clay.” The molten images are “wind” and “emptiness.”

## Segment 2 – Isaiah 42

Isaiah 42:1-9

This is the first suffering servant song. The four poems are found in Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12. They are characterized by a prophecy in which God speaks about His servant and foretells what he will do. As we reach the other suffering servant songs, the picture of what this enigmatic servant will do will become clearer and clearer, climaxing with the most famous one in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Other places where God speaks to “my servant” include Isaiah 20:3 (Isaiah); 22:20 (Eliakim); 37:35 (David); 41:8-9 (Israel); 42:19 (Israel?); 43:10 (Israel?); 44:1-2, 21 (Israel); 45:4 (Israel).

The servant songs do not identify who the servant is. Either God’s servant is a group or an individual. Owing to the numerous identifications of Israel as God’s servant, especially in Isaiah 49:3 (one of the servant songs), many prefer this interpretation. However, the servant is also described in clearly individualistic terms. He is born, suffers, dies, and ultimately triumphs. Furthermore, the servant’s mission is carried out on behalf of Israel (49:5; 53:3-6).

It would be difficult to deny that the servant of Yahweh is described as both a people and a person. How do we resolve this conundrum? R. T. France nicely summarizes the idea of corporate personality as an excellent solution to this problem as follows:

[B]oth collective and individual aspects are clearly present in the Servant figure. Most scholars today tend, therefore, to look for an exegesis similar to H. W. Robinson’s concept of ‘corporate personality’, i.e. the recognition that in the OT an individual (e.g. king or father) may represent and embody the group of which he is the head, so that he both *is* that group and yet can be placed over against it as its leader. So the Servant *is* Israel (49:3), he sums up in himself all that Israel represents, and yet he is an individual with a mission *to* Israel (49:5f.) and his experiences on their behalf are the object of the nation’s interest (53:1-6). The close juxtaposition of 49:3 and 49:5f shows that these two aspects of the Servant are inseparable. The individual character of the Servant is most clearly expressed in 52:13-53:12, so that in this passage ‘what began as personification (has) become a person (Rowley) and here all the emphasis is on the vicarious nature of his suffering as a substitute for his people. But this role is only possible because he *is* Israel, as its representative head.<sup>1</sup>

Verse 1

The first song (42:1-9) does not focus on the servant’s identity, but his function. The servant is energized by God’s spirit (Isaiah 11:1-5). He is God’s chosen one with whom He is well-pleased (Mark 1:11). Jesus is also called “servant” in Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30.

Verses 2-3

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<sup>1</sup> R. T. France, “Servant of the LORD,” *New Bible Dictionary: Second Edition* ed. J.D. Douglas (Wheaton, Tyndale 1982), p. 1093.

Jesus' ministry fulfilled Isaiah 42:1-9 (Matthew 12:13-22). Note the emphasis on meekness. Understanding the two comings of Jesus is the key to working out how the two strands of prophecy about the suffering servant and the conquering king could intertwine in the same person.

#### Verse 4

Justice is the idea of setting things right. Jesus did this in his ministry, in his death, and will bring about complete justice when he returns. Here we also have an emphasis on bringing justice beyond the borders of Israel to the Gentiles.

#### Verses 5-6

The servant is set as a covenant for the nations. This cannot refer to the old covenant (the Law of Moses) because it was made only with Israel and her descendants; it was an ethnic covenant. The new covenant, in contrast, includes all people whether Jew or Gentile. In Simeon's prophecy, he quoted Isaiah 42:6 in reference to the baby Jesus (Luke 2:25-32). The Apostle Paul clearly identified Jesus as God's servant through whom the Gentiles were given access to God (Ephesians 2:11-22; Romans 15:8-13).

#### Verse 7

Jesus' ministry opened the eyes of the blind (John 9). He continues to do this even today.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me....  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now, I see.

T'was Grace that taught...  
my heart to fear.  
And Grace, my fears relieved.  
How precious did that Grace appear...  
the hour I first believed.

#### Verses 8-9

The hearers of this oracle should have absolute confidence that it will occur.

#### Verses 10-12

Here begins a song of praise. The beginning of the song is not unlike Isaiah 12 where praise followed the prophecy of the coming Messiah in chapter 11.

#### Verses 13-16

God begins speaking in the first person and explains what He will do. He will bring judgment and also save the blind.

#### Verses 17-25

Now the tone shifts to direct confrontation. "You" are blind, deaf, enslaved, under judgment, and unaware of what God has done. Even though His people suffered His wrath, they still did not even realize it or take it to heart. We would be fooling ourselves to think we are immune to the same hard-heartedness. We must constantly go to God and ask Him to help us see correctly.