



# Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

To Download this lesson go to:

<http://www.purifiedbyfaith.com/Isaiah/Isaiah.htm>

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/ernest-meissonier/isaiah>

# The Servant – the LORD’s Answer to the World’s Plight (42:1-9)

- Last week we began looking at the first of the “Servant of the Lord” passages: **Isaiah 42:1-9**.
- We have are covering this passage in two parts:
  - Last week: The *Presentation* of the Servant (42:1-4)
  - This week: The *Commissioning* of the Servant (42:5-9)
- In the portion that we will be looking at today the LORD *directly addresses* the Servant with a specific charge (vv. 6-7).
- In the course of this charge the LORD makes reference to all that has gone before it in chapters 40-41.
- It identifies the Servant’s Lord as the Creator (v. 5) and reminds both the Servant and the readers that his ministry will provide further confirmation that the LORD is incomparable (vv. 8-9).

# The Commissioning of the Servant (42:5-9)

*42:5 This is what the true God, the LORD, says—the one who created the sky and stretched it out, the one who fashioned the earth and everything that lives on it, the one who gives breath to the people on it, and life to those who live on it: <sup>6</sup> “I, the LORD, officially commission you; 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. <sup>8</sup> “I am the LORD! That is my name! I will not share my glory with anyone else or the praise due me with idols. <sup>9</sup> Look, my earlier predictive oracles have come to pass; now I announce new events. Before they begin to occur, I reveal them to you.”*

*42:5 This is what the true God, the LORD, says— the one who created the sky and stretched it out, the one who fashioned the earth and everything that lives on it, the one who gives breath to the people on it, and life to those who live on it:*

- This verse introduces a new form of discourse.
- It is still the LORD who is speaking; but in the previous verses he had spoken *of* the Messiah (in the third person); here he is speaking *to* him directly.
- He introduces the discourse by showing that he is the Creator and Lord of all things.
- His *purpose* in saying this is to show that he has the ability to *sustain* the Servant in the work to which he has called him.
- The Servant has been commissioned by none other than he who formed the heavens and the earth and everything in it, and who gives life to all the people who dwell on the earth.

42:5 *This is what the true God, the LORD, says— the one **who created the sky and stretched it out**, the one **who fashioned the earth** and everything that lives on it, the one **who gives breath to the people on it**, and **life to those who live on it**:*

- The language here is very picturesque.
- God is described here as the one who “*stretched... out*” “*the sky*” like a tent (cf. 40:22) and “*fashioned*” (literally “hammered out”) the surface of the earth as he would a piece of metal.
- But of greater significance than those creative acts is that of giving “*breath*” and “*life*” to human beings.
- His concern for humans, as expressed in the next two verses (vv. 6-7), is the concern of the one who brought us into being and sustains us with every breath we draw.

42:6 “I, the LORD, officially commission you; **I take hold of your hand. I protect you** and make you a covenant mediator for people and a light to the nations...

- The LORD now envisions his Servant as standing before him.
- From the very outset, when the Servant appears on the scene, God will “*take hold of [his] hand*” to “*protect*” him for the seemingly impossible task to which he has been called.
- At the same time the LORD will continually guard the Servant against the many dangers that will confront him and threaten to interfere with his work.

42:6 “I, the LORD, officially commission you; I take hold of your hand. I protect you and make you a **covenant mediator for people** and a light to the nations...

- Next we see the *ultimate* purposes for which the Servant was sent are delineated.
- First of all he is to serve as a “*covenant mediator*.”
- Originally, the LORD made a “*covenant*” with **Abraham**.
- This covenant was followed by a “*covenant*” made with **all Israel** at Mount Sinai whose “*mediator*” was Moses (cf. Gal 3:19).
- A **greater** covenant is now under consideration, one that involves the “*people*,” that is **all** the “*people*” on the face of the earth.
- The Servant **himself** is the “*mediator*” of that covenant.

42:6 *“I, the LORD, officially commission you; I take hold of your hand. I protect you and make you a **covenant mediator** for people and a light to the nations...”*

- This covenant, of which Jesus is the “*mediator*”, is the “*new covenant*” which is prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34:
  - *“Indeed, a time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will make a **new covenant** with the people of Israel and Judah. It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I delivered them from Egypt...“I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people. “People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me,” says the Lord. “For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done.”*



42:6 *“I, the LORD, officially commission you; I take hold of your hand. I protect you and make you a **covenant mediator** for people and a light to the nations...*

- 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)*
- This same covenant is spoken of in other places in the Old Testament, though sometimes using different descriptive terms:
  - Isaiah 54:10 as the “*covenant of peace*”
  - Ezekiel 16:60ff as an “*everlasting covenant*”.

42:6 “I, the LORD, officially commission you; I take hold of your hand. I protect you and make you **a covenant mediator for people and a light to the nations...**

- Parallel to the expression “*a covenant mediator for people*” is the phrase “*a light to the nations*”.
- The servant doesn’t just **bring** “*light*” or **lead** into “*light*”, but he *is* himself the “*light*”.
- “*Light*” is a figurative description of **salvation** as we see in a later parallel passage: “*I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*” (Isaiah 49:6 ESV)”
- At the time this prophecy was made, the Gentiles were still in darkness (cf. Eph 2:12), i.e. the bondage that sin places upon men.
- And from this darkness there is **no deliverance** until the “*light*” of the world shines on them.

42:7 ...*to open blind eyes*, to release prisoners from dungeons, those who live in *darkness* from prisons.

- Here is prophesied the shining of the “*light to the nations*” upon those who walked in “*darkness*”.
- This deliverance is described in figurative terms.
- “*to open blind eyes*” is not a reference to those who are *physically* blind, but to the condition of blindness that is the result of *sin*.
- All sinners are “*blind*” in that they cannot see reality as it is.
- What they need is an opening of the eyes.
- Christ also spoke of Himself as the “*light of the world*” (John 8:12), i.e. the bringer of “*light*” to those who are “*blind*”.

42:7 ...*to open blind eyes, to release prisoners from dungeons, those who live in darkness from prisons.*

- In the light of LORD's citation of this passage when speaking to the Paul on the Damascus Road, we can see that the reference here is *universal* and includes both Jews and the Gentiles:
  - *I [the LORD] will rescue you [Paul] from your own people [i.e. the Jews] and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me. (Act 26:17-18 )*
- Therefore we see that when the Servant comes, he will bring light to the *world* (cf. John 8:12)

42:7 ...to open blind eyes, *to release prisoners from dungeons, those who live in darkness from prisons.*

- “*to release prisoners from dungeons*” – The need of the world is described as deliverance from prison.
- Man’s “normal” condition is not really normal.
- Because of sin he is bound and not free.
- Freedom comes only when the Servant *sets* men free.
- “*those who live in darkness from prisons*” – Those who are in prison are regarded as dwelling in darkness.
- Light and freedom are found only when men are delivered.
- This is a work that they *cannot* do for themselves; it must be done *for* them by the Servant.

42:8 *“I am the LORD! That is my name! I will not share my glory with anyone else or the praise due me with idols.”*

- As the climax to this section, God emphatically reminds the nation of who he is: *“I am the LORD! That is my name!”*
- The phrase *“That is my name!”* means simply that God’s Name is *Yahweh* (translated here and elsewhere as *“LORD”*).
- In the Semitic languages a person’s name is thought to describe the *nature* of that person.

42:8 ***"I am the LORD! That is my name! I will not share my glory with anyone else or the praise due me with idols.***

- Until the time of the exodus God was known to His people as *"El Shaddai"* (usually translated *"God Almighty"* in our English Bibles):
  - *When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am **God Almighty [El Shaddai]**; walk before me, and be blameless, (Gen 17:1 ESV)*
  - *And God said to [Jacob], "I am **God Almighty [El Shaddai]**: be fruitful and multiply. (Gen 35:11a ESV)*
  - *May **God Almighty [El Shaddai]** grant you mercy before [Joseph], and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. (Gen 43:14 ESV)*

42:8 *"I am the LORD! That is my name! I will not share my glory with anyone else or the praise due me with idols.*

- At the time of the *exodus*, however, God gave his people a *further* revelation of His nature, which is found in the meaning of his name: *Yahweh*.
- From Exodus 3 we learn that the word Yahweh has to do with the *eternity* or *aseity* of God.
- His name reveals this eternal God to be the One who sovereignly chooses His people and performs for them an act of redemption:
  - *Moses said to God, "If I go to the Israelites and tell them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?'—what should I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM that I AM. And he said, "You must say this to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.' ... 'The LORD— the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob – This is my name forever, and this is my memorial from generation to generation."* (Exodus 3:13-15)



42:8 *“I am the LORD! That is my name! I will not share my glory with anyone else or the praise due me with idols.*”

- It is *this Yahweh*, who has chosen the Servant.
- Therefore, because the LORD is the *eternal* One who has entered into covenant with His people, it is *certain* that the Servant, in whom the LORD delights, will come to bring salvation to this people and to deliver them from their bondage.
- Furthermore, because the *Name* of the LORD is Yahweh, He will not *“share [his] glory with anyone”*.
- The reference here is to His essential *“glory”*, which He possesses in and of Himself.
- Were the LORD to give His glory to another, He would be denying Himself, negating His own nature.

42:8 *"I am the LORD! That is my name! I will not share my **glory** with anyone else or **the praise due me with idols**.*

- There is not the slightest possibility that another could take "*glory*" from the LORD.
- If there is to be any transfer of that glory, it will be the LORD himself who does it.
- The situation lies entirely in His hands.
- Furthermore, He tells us that he will not share "*the praise [that is] due [him] with idols*".
- The "*praise*" belongs to Him, just as the "*glory*" is His.
- He alone has rightful claim upon his people, and He is *jealous* for them.
- But *because* He is jealous, His people can rest assured that He will see to it that the Servant faithfully carries out His work.

42:9 *Look, my earlier predictive oracles have come to pass; now I announce new events. Before they begin to occur, I reveal them to you.*"

- But what does the prophet mean by the statement, "*my earlier predictive oracles have come to pass*"?
- What are the "*my earlier predictive oracles*"?
- Numerous examples could be given.
- For example, there are distinct passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah, which declared beforehand that Babylon would fall at the hands of the Medes, passages like Isaiah 13 and 14 (esp. 13:17); 21:1–10; Jer 50 and 51 (esp. 51:11, 28).
- No one could have foreseen, for example, that the Medes would be successful in doing this.
- But the prophets, by the spirit of the Lord, **foretold** that it would come to pass, and it **did**.

42:9 *Look, my earlier predictive oracles have come to pass; now I announce new events. **Before they begin to occur**, I reveal them to you.*"

- And now the prophet is foretelling restoration from Captivity for Israel and salvation unto the ends of the earth through the Servant of the Lord.
- "*Before they begin to occur*" the Lord tells of them.
- These are the "*new events*" here referred to.
- These future events will come to pass as certainly as did the predictions of days of old.
- This is one of the distinctive achievements of the God of Jacob and the great Lord of Israel.
- All this makes the work of the Servant of the Lord more glorious.

# Next Time

I plan to look at “God’s Courtroom Scene” in **Isaiah 43:8-13** where God tells the Israelites “You are my witnesses”.

# Class Discussion Time



# Class Discussion Time

- There are many otherwise good theologians in our day who blur the distinctions that the scriptures make between the old and new covenants – often times trying to combine them under a made up covenant that they call “the covenant of grace”.
- Some of the ideas presented in today’s class remind us of the distinctions between these covenants. For example:
  - The Old Covenant was mediated by Moses; the New Covenant is mediated by Christ (Isaiah 42:6; Heb 9:15; 12:24 cf. John 1:17).
  - The Old Covenant was with the nation of Israel; the New Covenant is with men from every nation (Isaiah 42:6; Contrast Amos 3:2 with Rev 5:9).
  - Jer 31:31 list numerous other distinctions
- Do you think it is important to recognize the distinctions between the Old and New Covenant? Why or why not?

# Class Discussion Time

- The Jews had such reverence for the name of God, that they did not dare to even *pronounce* the name of God when reading out loud from the scriptures for fear that they might accidentally take the Lord's name in vain (cf. Ex 20:7).
- It's hard to even imagine anyone having this kind of concern in our day as we tend to be very casual in our approach to God and his name.
- Did today's material on the name of God, give you a better appreciation for the kind of reverence we should have in thinking and speaking about the LORD?