

# Dr. Robert Chisholm, Isaiah's Servant Songs

## Session 1: The Servant of the Lord: Champion of Justice and Covenant Mediator (A) (Isaiah 42:1-9)

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, 4) FAQs

### 1) Abstract:

Dr. Robert Chisholm's lecture, "Isaiah's Servant Songs, Session 1," introduces the first of four "Servant Songs" found in the book of Isaiah, specifically Isaiah 42:1-9. He addresses the common academic debate regarding the authorship of Isaiah 40-66, maintaining that the eighth-century prophet Isaiah wrote the entire book, prophesying the Babylonian exile and speaking to a future generation as if he were present. Chisholm posits that the **servant** in Isaiah 42 is not the nation of Israel as a whole, nor King Cyrus, but rather an **ideal Davidic king** who will act as a **champion of justice** and a **covenant mediator**, bringing peace and salvation to the nations. He supports this by drawing parallels to royal psalms and Isaiah 11, highlighting the concept of a king who establishes justice and brings about a transformed world, hinting at the future suffering of this servant.

### 2) Briefing Document:

#### Isaiah's Servant Songs: Session 1 - The Servant of the Lord: Champion of Justice and Covenant Mediator

##### Overview of Isaiah 40-66 and Context of the Servant Songs

Dr. Robert Chisholm's first session on Isaiah's Servant Songs sets the stage for understanding these deeply messianic texts within their broader biblical context. Chisholm addresses the debated authorship of Isaiah 40-66, asserting his minority view that the entire book was written by the 8th-century prophet Isaiah. He explains that Isaiah, through divine inspiration, "projects himself into the future" to speak to the exilic and post-exilic generations.

The overarching theme of Isaiah 40-66, particularly in chapters 40-41, is **comfort and promised deliverance** from the Babylonian exile, which Isaiah had previously prophesied (Chisholm, p. 2). The Lord's message emphasizes His continued presence, power, and intention to fulfill His promises to Israel despite their sin and exile. This section introduces

Cyrus, the Persian king, as an agent of the Lord's deliverance, who will conquer Babylon and allow the exiles to return (Chisholm, p. 3-4).

A critical distinction is made regarding the identity of "Israel" as a servant of the Lord. In Isaiah 41, the nation Israel/Jacob is explicitly identified as God's servant, but this Israel is "blind and deaf" due to their abandonment of the Lord and is in need of deliverance. This sets up a crucial point for understanding the Servant Songs: the Servant in chapters 42, 49, 50, and 52-53 is distinct from the nation Israel in its fallen state (Chisholm, p. 4).

#### The Identity and Ministry of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9

The first Servant Song in Isaiah 42:1-9 introduces a specific Servant of the Lord. Chisholm clarifies that while there might be an initial inclination to identify this Servant with Cyrus due to his role as a conquering deliverer, the description in Isaiah 42 immediately differentiates them. This Servant is "meek" and "not a conquering king" (Chisholm, p. 5).

Chisholm argues that this Servant is **not the exiled Jacob Israel** either, despite some linguistic similarities and interpretive traditions. The "clinching" argument lies in the second Servant Song (Isaiah 49), where the Servant (called "Israel") has a primary task: "To deliver to Israel" (Chisholm, p. 5-6). This necessitates a distinction, leading to the "easiest solution" proposed by John Oswalt: that "Israel is being used as a function there." The Servant represents an "ideal Israel" who will deliver the "exiled sinful Jacob Israel" (Chisholm, p. 6). This ideal Servant is also explicitly identified with the Spirit of the Lord resting upon Him, foreshadowing Jesus' baptism (Chisholm, p. 6).

The Servant's core ministry, as detailed in Isaiah 42:1-4, is to be a **"champion of justice"** (Chisholm, p. 6). He will "make just decrees for the nations," ministering to the needy, poor, and "dim wick" (Chisholm, p. 6). While the suffering dimension is not overt in this first song, Chisholm identifies subtle hints of opposition and future suffering in phrases like "he will not cry out or shout" (a verb often used for crying out in pain) and the threat of him "grow[ing] dim or be[ing] crushed" (Chisholm, p. 7).

#### The Servant as a King and Covenant Mediator

Chisholm strongly asserts that the Servant in the first and second songs is **"clearly picture[d]... as a king"** (Chisholm, p. 7). He supports this by drawing parallels to royal psalms (Psalm 45, 18, 72) and the description of David's reign, where establishing justice is a primary royal responsibility. In ancient Near Eastern cultures, kings were seen as the arbiters and embodiment of justice (Chisholm, p. 8-9).

Crucially, Chisholm connects the Servant to Isaiah 11, which depicts an "ideal Davidic king" upon whom "the Lord's spirit will rest." This future king "will treat the poor fairly and

make right decisions for the downtrodden of the earth" (Chisholm, p. 10). Chisholm argues that the ancient audience would have implicitly understood the Servant's royal identity, even without explicit mention, due to cultural familiarity and Isaiah's earlier prophecies. This Servant is "that Davidic king," and Jesus fulfills this ideal (Chisholm, p. 11-12).

Beyond being a king, the Servant also functions as a **"covenant mediator for people and a light to the nations"** (Chisholm, p. 12). The phrase "make you a covenant for the people" (Isaiah 42:6) is understood through metonymy, where the Servant mediates a covenant between God and humanity. The "light to the nations" signifies salvation and deliverance (Chisholm, p. 13).

Chisholm's updated position is that "the people" in this context refers to **all humankind**, a "broader than just Israel" covenant, reflecting God's authority over all nations as creator (Chisholm, p. 13). He notes that while Isaiah 49 narrows the focus to Israel for a renewed covenant, the immediate context of Isaiah 42 supports a universal scope. This renewed covenant aims to address the broken "perpetual covenant" with Noah, which nations violated through bloodshed (Chisholm, p. 15-16).

The Servant's work of establishing justice and bringing light will lead the nations to worship the one true God, ultimately participating in "his kingdom of peace and justice" envisioned in Isaiah 2 (Chisholm, p. 15-16). The fourth Servant Song will later explain how reconciliation with sinners is achieved (Chisholm, p. 16).

### 3) Study Guide:

#### Study Guide: Isaiah's Servant Songs - Session 1

##### I. Overview of Isaiah's Servant Songs

- **Key Passages:** Isaiah 42, 49, 50, and 52-53.
- **Messianic Significance:** The Servant Songs are understood to be deeply messianic, predicting the coming Messiah.
- **Contextual Importance:** Understanding the songs requires orienting oneself to the broader context of Isaiah 40-66, as the first song lays the foundation for understanding the others.
- **Primary Roles of the Servant (First Two Songs):** Champion of Justice and Covenant Mediator.

## II. Authorship and Historical Setting of Isaiah 40-66

- **Traditional View (Chisholm's Position):** The entire book of Isaiah (chapters 1-66) was written by the 8th-century prophet Isaiah, with allowances for "inspired additions."
- **Higher Critical Consensus: Proto-Isaiah (1-39):** Attributed to the prophet Isaiah (pre-exilic period, around 700 BC).
- **Deutero-Isaiah (40-55):** Attributed to an anonymous prophet during the time of the Babylonian exile.
- **Trito-Isaiah (56-66):** Attributed to a third anonymous prophet during the post-exilic period (after return to the land).
- **Chisholm's Argument for Single Authorship:** Isaiah, the 8th-century prophet, prophesied the Babylonian exile (e.g., Isaiah 39). He then "projects himself into the future" and speaks to the future generation in exile as if he were there, a rhetorical device similar to a wise grandfather writing a letter for his granddaughter's future wedding day. This allows for prophetic foresight, demonstrating God's ability to announce future events.
- **Shift in Perspective (40-66 vs. 1-39):** 1-39: Exile is predicted.
- **40-66:** Exile has already taken place; deliverance from exile is being promised.

## III. Immediate Context Leading to the First Servant Song (Isaiah 40-41)

- **Isaiah 40:1-11 (Message of Comfort and Preparation): Theme:** Comfort for God's exiled people, as Jerusalem has suffered.
- **Personification:** Zion is a woman whose children (people) have left but will return.
- **Preparation:** "Prepare the way for the Lord's return" – a moral preparation for the kingdom, applied later to John the Baptist's ministry.
- **Isaiah 40:12-31 (Lord's Omnipotence and Faithfulness): Assurance:** The Lord has not abandoned His people; He intends to fulfill promises to the patriarchs and restore the land.
- **Contrast with Babylon:** God emphasizes His power over the Babylonians and their gods (e.g., Marduk), demonstrating He is not limited by time or space.
- **Reason for Exile:** Sin, necessitating repentance for restoration.

- **Isaiah 41 (Instrument of Deliverance - Cyrus):**Historical Background: Babylonian invasions led to exile in 586 BC.
- **Cyrus the Persian:** Introduced as God's agent for deliverance; conquered Babylon around 540 BC and allowed exiles to return.
- **Warrior King Imagery:** Described as "one from the east" or "north" who subdues kings (e.g., 41:2-3, 25).
- **Prophetic Foresight:** Cyrus is mentioned by name in Isaiah 44-45, further supporting the traditional view of Isaiah's authorship, as it shows God announcing distant future events.
- **Identity of "Servant Israel" in Isaiah 41:8-20:**Nation Israel as **Servant:** The Lord addresses His exiled people as "You, my servant Israel, Jacob, whom I have chosen."
- **Problem:** This "servant" Israel is "blind and deaf," having abandoned the Lord and needing deliverance, distinct from the ideal Servant in the Servant Songs.

#### IV. The First Servant Song (Isaiah 42:1-9)

- **Introduction of the Servant:** "Here is my servant whom I support, my chosen one in whom I take pleasure. I have placed my spirit on him." (v.1)
- **Servant's Ministry and Characteristics:****Champion of Justice:** Will "make just decrees for the nations" (v.1), bringing justice to a world characterized by injustice.
- **Meekness and Compassion:** "He will not cry out or shout. He will not publicize himself in the streets. A crushed reed he will not break. A dim wick he will not extinguish." (vv.2-3) – ministering to the needy and oppressed rather than crushing them.
- **Steadfastness:** "He will not grow dim or be crushed before establishing justice on the earth." (v.4)
- **Scope:** Justice to be established "on the earth," with "coastlands" waiting for his decrees.
- **Hints of Suffering:**"Will not cry out" (tza'ak): This verb often denotes crying out in pain or as a victim, subtly foreshadowing the Servant's opposition and suffering (as developed in later songs, especially Isaiah 53).
- "Will not grow dim or be crushed": Implies a threat of such, again hinting at opposition.

- **Servant as King (Royal Ideal):**Connection to Royal Psalms: The Servant's role as a champion of justice aligns with the responsibilities of a king in the ancient Near East (e.g., Psalms 45, 72). Kings were expected to establish justice (mishpat) and righteousness (tzedekah).
- **Davidic Ideal:** While historical kings like David (2 Samuel 8:15) sought justice, none perfectly fulfilled the ideal. The Servant embodies the ultimate Davidic king envisioned in royal psalms.
- **Isaiah 11:1-8 Correlation:** This passage describes a future ideal Davidic king (a "shoot from Jesse's rootstock") upon whom the Lord's spirit will rest, who will judge fairly, treat the poor justly, and establish universal peace (animal kingdom transformed). Chisholm argues this ideal king is the Servant in 42:1-4.
- **Cultural Context:** The ancient audience would implicitly understand the Servant as a king, even if not explicitly named as such, given the cultural understanding of a king's role in establishing justice.
- **Multi-faceted Role:** The Servant is not *just* a king; he also functions as a prophet (like a new Moses) and eventually a priest (Isaiah 53).
- **Servant as Covenant Mediator and Light to the Nations (42:5-7):**Divine Authority: The Lord emphasizes His identity as the Creator of the sky, earth, and all life, thus having the authority to commission the Servant for all nations.
- **Commissioning:** "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." (v.6)
- **"Covenant Mediator for People":** The Servant *is* the covenant (metonymy), meaning he mediates a covenant.
- **Identity of "the People":** Chisholm's evolving view:
- **Previous View (aligned with Isaiah 49):** Refers to Israel (exiled Jacob Israel), with God renewing the New Covenant with them.
- **Current View (based on Isaiah 42 context):** Refers to all humanity/nations (om and goyim), as "people" was used for all humanity in verse 5 and parallel to "nations" in the same verse. The Servant mediates a renewed covenant relationship between God and humankind, broader than just Israel.

- **"Light to the Nations":** Light signifies salvation and deliverance. This is royal imagery found in other ancient Near Eastern cultures (e.g., Assyrian kings called "light of all humankind").
- **Specific Actions:** To "open blind eyes" and "release prisoners from dungeons" – metaphors for deliverance of the oppressed and unjustly imprisoned.
- **Lord's Declaration and Assurance (42:8-9):Uniqueness of God:** "I am the Lord, that is my name. I will not share my glory with anyone else, or the praise due me with idols."
- **Prophetic Fulfillment:** "Look, my earlier predictive oracles have come to pass, the former things. Now I announce new events." (Referring to the Exodus as a "former thing" and a new exodus/deliverance as "new events.") God's track record proves His authority and control over history, unlike pagan gods.
- **Proper Response (Implicit in 42:10-12):Universal Praise:** All creation (coastlands, wilderness, cities, mountains) should sing a "brand new song" and praise the Lord for His deeds.
- **Emphasis on Nations:** This praise emphasizes the global impact of the Servant's work and the Lord's desire for universal worship.

#### V. The Servant's Impact on the Nations

- **Addressing Idolatry:** Nations, though created by the true God, have failed to honor Him due to idolatry.
- **Restoration to True Worship:** The Servant's work will lead nations to recognize and worship the one true God.
- **Broken Noahic Covenant:Genesis 9:** God established a "perpetual covenant" with Noah and his sons (all humankind), commissioning them to be fruitful and respect the image of God.
- **Broken by Nations:** Isaiah 24 and 26 indicate nations have broken this covenant by "polluting the earth with human bloodshed."
- **Consequence:** Nations are "destined for destruction."
- **Deliverance:** God calls nations to turn to Him for deliverance (Isaiah 45:22).
- **Vision of Peace and Justice:Isaiah 2:** Nations will beat "swords into plowshares," come to Jerusalem, and recognize the king as their covenant lord, experiencing peace and justice.

- **Isaiah 19:** Assyria and Egypt (enemies) will reconcile and worship the Lord alongside Israel.
- **Servant as Agent:** The Servant mediates this "renewed covenant relationship between God and humankind" and brings "the light of salvation to the repentant among the nations."
- **Future Explanation:** The fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 53) will explain *how* God is able to reconcile with sinners.

#### Quiz: Isaiah's Servant Songs - Session 1

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Dr. Chisholm, what is the traditional view regarding the authorship of the entire book of Isaiah, and how does it differ from the higher critical consensus?
2. How does Chisholm explain the shift in historical setting between Isaiah chapters 1-39 and 40-66, if the 8th-century prophet Isaiah wrote the entire book?
3. In Isaiah 40, what is the main message conveyed to the exiled people, and what specific action are they encouraged to take?
4. Who is identified as God's instrument for delivering the people from Babylonian bondage in Isaiah 41, and what is notable about his mention in the text?
5. Why does Chisholm argue that the "servant Israel" mentioned in Isaiah 41 is distinct from the Servant in the Servant Songs of Isaiah 42 and 49?
6. List three characteristics of the Servant described in Isaiah 42:1-4 that indicate his gentle and compassionate nature.
7. How do the royal psalms (like Psalm 72) and Isaiah 11 contribute to Chisholm's argument that the Servant in Isaiah 42 is a king?
8. What does the phrase "covenant mediator for people" mean in Isaiah 42:6, and what is Chisholm's current understanding of "the people" in this context?
9. According to Chisholm, what is the significance of the Lord proclaiming, "Look, my earlier predictive oracles have come to pass, the former things. Now I announce new events" in Isaiah 42:9?
10. How does the concept of the broken Noahic covenant relate to the Servant's role in bringing salvation and a renewed covenant relationship to the nations?

#### Quiz Answer Key



1. **Authorship:** Chisholm upholds the traditional view that the 8th-century prophet Isaiah wrote the entire book. This contrasts with the higher critical consensus, which posits different authors for Isaiah 1-39 (Proto-Isaiah), 40-55 (Deutero-Isaiah), and 56-66 (Trito-Isaiah).
2. **Shift in Setting:** Chisholm suggests that the prophet Isaiah, empowered by God, rhetorically projects himself into the future. He speaks to the future exiled generation as if he were present with them, allowing him to prophesy deliverance from an exile that has already occurred from that future perspective, even though it was still predicted in his own time.
3. **Isaiah 40 Message:** The main message is comfort for God's exiled people, reassuring them that God has not abandoned them despite their suffering in Babylon. They are encouraged to "prepare the way for the Lord's return," which signifies a moral and spiritual preparation for His restoration.
4. **Cyrus's Role:** Cyrus the Persian is identified as God's instrument for deliverance from Babylonian bondage. It is notable that he is mentioned by name in later chapters (Isaiah 44-45), which Chisholm uses as evidence for Isaiah's prophetic ability to announce distant future events.
5. **Distinction of Servants:** Chisholm argues that "servant Israel" in Isaiah 41 refers to the nation in exile, which is portrayed as "blind and deaf" and in need of deliverance due to its sins. This contrasts with the ideal Servant in the Servant Songs, who is sinless and actively brings deliverance and justice.
6. **Gentle Characteristics of Servant:** The Servant "will not cry out or shout," indicating a quiet and unassuming approach. He also "will not break a crushed reed" or "extinguish a dim wick," showing profound compassion for the weak, needy, and those near despair.
7. **Servant as King:** Royal psalms associate kings with the responsibility of establishing justice and righteousness, aligning with the Servant's primary task. Isaiah 11 describes an ideal Davidic king upon whom the Spirit rests and who judges fairly and brings peace, directly correlating with the Servant's characteristics and mission in Isaiah 42.
8. **Covenant Mediator:** "Covenant mediator for people" means the Servant is the agent through whom a covenant is established between God and humanity; he embodies or brings about the covenant itself (metonymy). Chisholm's current view is that "the people" here refer to all humankind/nations, indicating a broader, universal covenant, not solely with Israel.

9. **Lord's Declaration Significance:** This declaration emphasizes God's unique power and authority as the one true God who controls history. By demonstrating a track record of fulfilling past prophecies (like the Exodus), God proves His ability to announce and bring about new future events, challenging the impotency of idols.
10. **Broken Noahic Covenant:** The nations, through bloodshed and idolatry, have broken the perpetual covenant God established with Noah (representing all humankind). The Servant's role is to mediate a *renewed* covenant relationship with God for these repentant nations, restoring them to proper worship and leading them into a kingdom of peace and justice.

#### Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss Dr. Chisholm's arguments for the single authorship of the book of Isaiah (chapters 1-66). How does his interpretation of Isaiah's rhetorical projection into the future address the critical scholarly consensus of Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah?
2. Analyze the immediate context of Isaiah 40-41 and explain how it sets the stage for the introduction of the Servant in Isaiah 42. Specifically, discuss the themes of comfort, God's omnipotence, the role of Cyrus, and the "servant Israel" as presented by Chisholm.
3. Examine the two primary roles of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9 as a "Champion of Justice" and a "Covenant Mediator." How does Chisholm use other biblical texts (e.g., royal psalms, Isaiah 11) and ancient Near Eastern cultural context to support his argument that the Servant functions as a king?
4. Discuss the identity of "the people" in Isaiah 42:6 where the Servant is made "a covenant mediator for people and a light to the nations." Trace Chisholm's evolving perspective on this phrase and articulate his current reasoning for understanding it as referring to all humankind rather than exclusively Israel.
5. Explain how the First Servant Song (Isaiah 42:1-9) lays the theological groundwork for understanding the Servant's impact on the nations. Include in your discussion the concept of the broken Noahic covenant, the nations' idolatry, and the vision of future peace and universal worship.

#### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ancient Near East (ANE):** The region and civilizations in and around the Middle East (including Mesopotamia, Egypt, Levant) from antiquity, often serving as a cultural and historical backdrop for understanding biblical texts.

- **Assyrian Crisis:** A period around 700 BC when the Assyrian Empire posed a significant threat to Judah, culminating in Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, from which God miraculously delivered the city (Isaiah 36-37).
- **Babylonian Exile:** The period in Israelite history (starting roughly 586 BC) when much of the population of Judah was forcibly removed from their homeland and deported to Babylon by the Neo-Babylonian Empire.
- **Bernard Doom:** A scholar who proposed the theory of "Trito-Isaiah," dividing Isaiah 40-66 into two distinct parts (40-55 and 56-66) written by different authors.
- **Champion of Justice:** A primary role of the Servant in Isaiah 42, meaning he will establish fairness, righteousness, and proper order among the nations, aligning with the ideal responsibilities of a king.
- **Covenant Mediator:** A primary role of the Servant, particularly in Isaiah 42:6, indicating that he functions as the intermediary through whom a covenant relationship is established between God and humanity.
- **Cyrus the Persian (Korsh):** The founder of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, prophesied by name in Isaiah (44-45) as God's agent who would conquer Babylon and allow the exiled Jews to return to their homeland.
- **Deutero-Isaiah:** A term used by higher critical scholars to refer to the anonymous author(s) believed to have written Isaiah 40-55, distinct from the 8th-century prophet Isaiah.
- **Ideal Israel:** A concept referring to a true, righteous, and faithful manifestation of Israel's purpose, as opposed to the historical, sinful, and exiled nation of Jacob-Israel. The Servant is understood as embodying this ideal Israel.
- **LXX (Septuagint):** The oldest surviving Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, originating in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC.
- **Marduk:** The chief god of the city of Babylon, often considered the patron deity of the Babylonian Empire.
- **Messiah (Messianic):** From the Hebrew "anointed one," referring to a divinely chosen and empowered deliverer, often a kingly figure, who would fulfill God's promises. The Servant Songs are considered deeply messianic, pointing to Jesus.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which a thing or concept is referred to by the name of something closely associated with that thing or concept (e.g., the Servant *is* the covenant because he mediates it).

- **Mosaic Covenant:** The covenant God established with the nation of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai, outlining laws and principles for their relationship with God.
- **Noahic Covenant:** The perpetual covenant God established with Noah and all humankind after the Great Flood (Genesis 9), promising not to destroy all life by flood again and setting moral expectations for humanity (e.g., respecting human life).
- **Prophetic Projection:** Dr. Chisholm's interpretation that the prophet Isaiah, inspired by God, rhetorically places himself in the future (the time of the exile) to address the people as if he were there, thus accounting for prophecies about events far beyond his own lifetime.
- **Proto-Isaiah:** A term used by higher critical scholars to refer to the author of Isaiah 1-39, typically identified as the 8th-century prophet Isaiah.
- **Relevance Theory:** A cognitive theory of communication that suggests hearers/readers infer implied meanings based on context and shared knowledge, rather than requiring every detail to be explicitly stated.
- **Royal Psalms:** Psalms (e.g., 45, 72) that primarily concern the king, often depicting an ideal monarch and his responsibilities, which are frequently understood as having messianic implications for the ultimate Davidic king.
- **Servant Songs:** Four distinct poetic passages within the book of Isaiah (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12) that describe a mysterious figure, the "Servant of the Lord," and his divine mission.
- **Shamash:** The Mesopotamian sun god, often associated with justice and righteousness, whom kings would report to regarding their efforts to establish justice.
- **Trito-Isaiah:** A term used by higher critical scholars to refer to the anonymous author(s) believed to have written Isaiah 56-66, distinct from Proto- and Deutero-Isaiah.
- **tza'ak (תָּצַק):** A Hebrew verb meaning "to cry out," often used in contexts of pain, distress, or as a victim. Its use in Isaiah 42:2 is noted by Chisholm as a subtle hint of the Servant's future suffering.

## 4) FAQs:

What are the "Servant Songs" in the book of Isaiah, and where are they found?

The "Servant Songs" are a series of passages within the book of Isaiah that are notably messianic in nature. They focus on a figure referred to as "the Servant of the Lord." These songs are found in Isaiah chapters 42, 49, 50, and then 52-53. These passages are considered crucial for understanding the prophetic themes of justice, covenant, and salvation in Isaiah.

What is the prevailing scholarly debate regarding the authorship of Isaiah 40-66, and what is Dr. Chisholm's position?

There is a significant scholarly debate about the authorship of Isaiah 40-66. The "higher critical consensus" suggests that these chapters were not written by the 8th-century prophet Isaiah but rather by later authors, often referred to as "Deutero-Isaiah" (chapters 40-55, from the time of the exile) and "Trito-Isaiah" (chapters 56-66, post-exilic). Dr. Chisholm, however, holds the minority view that the entire book of Isaiah was written by the 8th-century prophet Isaiah. He allows for minor inspired additions but rejects the idea of mass authorship by different individuals. He believes Isaiah, by divine inspiration, projected himself into the future to address the exiled generation.

How does the broader context of Isaiah 40-66 prepare for the introduction of the Servant Songs?

The broader context of Isaiah 40-66 sets the stage for the Servant Songs by focusing on comfort and deliverance for God's exiled people. Chapter 40 announces a message of comfort and calls for moral preparation for the Lord's return, reminding the people that God has not abandoned them despite their exile due to sin. Chapter 41 introduces Cyrus, the Persian king, as an instrument God will use to deliver Israel from Babylonian captivity, highlighting God's power and ability to predict future events. This section also initially identifies the nation Israel as God's servant, which is important for understanding the nuanced identity of the Servant in the subsequent songs.

Who is the "Servant of the Lord" in Isaiah 42, and how is his identity distinguished from the nation Israel and King Cyrus?

In Isaiah 42, the "Servant of the Lord" is portrayed as a meek figure, chosen by God and endowed with His Spirit, whose primary task is to bring justice to the nations. While the nation Israel is also called "servant" in Isaiah, and King Cyrus is an agent of deliverance, the

Servant in the songs is distinct. Unlike exiled Israel, who is described as blind and deaf due to their sins, the Servant in the songs is perfect and righteous. Furthermore, the second Servant Song (Isaiah 49) clarifies that this Servant's task includes delivering Israel (Jacob), indicating that the Servant is not the nation Israel itself, but an "ideal Israel" who will function to restore the sinful "exiled Jacob Israel." This Servant also differs from Cyrus, a conquering king, as the Servant is characterized by gentleness and does not achieve his aims through force.

What are the key characteristics and responsibilities of the Servant as described in Isaiah 42:1-4?

The Servant in Isaiah 42:1-4 is depicted with several key characteristics and responsibilities:

1. **Champion of Justice:** He is commissioned by God to "make just decrees for the nations" and establish justice on the earth. This is a primary royal responsibility, associating him with ideal kingship.
2. **Meek and Gentle:** He "will not cry out or shout," nor "publicize himself in the streets." He "will not break a crushed reed" or "extinguish a dim wick," signifying his compassion and care for the vulnerable and oppressed.
3. **Endurance Amidst Opposition:** While not explicitly detailed, there are subtle hints of suffering and opposition (e.g., "will not cry out" in pain, "will not grow dim or be crushed"), foreshadowing the deeper suffering described in later Servant Songs.
4. **Spirit-Empowered:** God's Spirit is placed upon him, enabling him to fulfill his mission.

How does the Servant's role as a "champion of justice" connect with the concept of kingship in ancient Israel and the broader Ancient Near East?

The Servant's role as a "champion of justice" is deeply connected to the concept of kingship in ancient Israel and the wider Ancient Near East. Kings were primarily responsible for establishing and maintaining justice in their realms. Royal psalms, such as Psalm 45, 72, and 2 Samuel 8:15, consistently associate the king with the administration of justice. The ideal king was expected to defend the oppressed, deliver the poor, and crush the oppressor. This responsibility was not limited to Israel but was a common expectation for rulers throughout the region. Therefore, when Isaiah describes the Servant as one who will establish justice on a global scale, it strongly implies a royal, kingly figure, particularly the future ideal Davidic king as envisioned in Isaiah 11.

In what ways is the Servant described as a "Covenant Mediator" and a "Light to the Nations" in Isaiah 42?

In Isaiah 42:6, the Servant is explicitly stated to be a "covenant mediator for people" and a "light to the nations."

1. **Covenant Mediator:** The Servant is literally referred to as "a covenant," indicating that he will mediate a covenant between God and humankind. This is understood as the product of his mediatorial work, enabling a renewed relationship between God and people. Dr. Chisholm believes this covenant initially refers to a broader covenant with all humanity, building on the Noahic covenant, which the nations have broken.
2. **Light to the Nations:** The "light" metaphor signifies salvation and deliverance. The Servant will bring God's salvation to the nations, opening "blind eyes" (metaphorically for granting proper understanding and just treatment) and releasing "prisoners from dungeons" (delivering the oppressed). This global emphasis highlights that the Servant's impact extends beyond Israel to all peoples who will then be ready to worship the one true God.

How is the first Servant Song linked to the broader theme of God's sovereignty and future plans for all nations?

The first Servant Song (Isaiah 42:1-9) is intrinsically linked to God's sovereignty and His universal plans. God introduces Himself as the Creator of the sky, earth, and all life, emphasizing His supreme authority over all nations. His commissioning of the Servant is an act of His sovereign will to bring justice and salvation globally. The announcement that "earlier predictive oracles have come to pass" (like the Exodus) and that God is now announcing "new events" reinforces His control over history and His unique ability to declare the future. The emphasis on the Servant being a "light to the nations" and a "covenant mediator for people" (humankind) demonstrates God's intent to reconcile not just Israel but all of humanity to Himself, leading to a future where all nations acknowledge Him and live in peace and justice, as envisioned in Isaiah 2 and 19.