

Dr. Robert Chisholm, Servant Songs, Session 2, Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicaleLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Hey there and welcome to The Deep Dive. Have you ever, you know, wondered how really ancient texts written centuries back could lay out such a specific picture for someone in the future, someone who maybe flips expectations upside down? It is pretty remarkable. Well, today we are diving deep into some prophecies that, when you look at them a certain way, seem to offer surprising clarity about one of history's really pivotal figures.

That's right. Our source material for this discussion is Dr. Robert Chisholm's teaching on Isaiah's Servant Songs. We're specifically looking at his Session 2, covering Isaiah chapter 42, verses 1 through 9, and then chapter 49, verses 1 to 3. Yeah, and our mission really is to unpack how these prophecies, written so long before, seem to point so directly to a specific person.

We want to explore what these Servant Songs reveal about his identity, which was unexpected, his purpose, and how he kind of challenged the definitions of power and leadership at the time. It really turns things on their head. Get ready to connect some dots.

Maybe some of you didn't even know they were there. So let's kick things off with that first Servant Song, Isaiah 42. It really is striking how themes from just that passage seem to pop up all over the Gospels.

Oh, absolutely. Like the writers had Isaiah open right next to them. It seems that way sometimes, and the connections appear really early on.

Think about Simeon. He's in Luke chapter 2. Right, the old prophet in the temple. Exactly.

He holds the infant Jesus, says he's seen God's salvation, and calls Jesus a light for revelation to the Gentiles. Okay. Now that's not just, you know, a nice phrase.

It directly echoes Isaiah 42, verses 6 and 7, and also chapter 49, verse 6, where the servant is called a light to the nations. Ah, okay. I see the link.

So right from infancy, Jesus is being framed in this servant role, but one with this global mission. And that kind of unexpected pattern, it just keeps going, right, into his public life, his baptism. The baptism, Matthew 3 and Mark 1, instead of arriving like some, you know, conquering hero.

Yeah, which is what many expected. Right. He gets in line with everyone else.

To be baptized, he identifies with sinners, even though the text presents him as sinless. That specific act is really significant. Why so significant? What's the message there? Well, it seems to redefine what messianic power looks like.

It foreshadows his ultimate mission, taking on human sin, laying the groundwork for a new covenant. A new agreement with God. Exactly.

A totally fresh relationship based not on strict law-keeping, but on, well, grace. And right then, at the baptism, God's voice declares, this is my son whom I love. With him, I am well pleased.

Powerful words. Very. And that statement actually blends language from two key places.

Psalms 2, which identifies the messianic king, and Isaiah 42, verse 1, identifying the spirit-filled servant. So you get kingship and servanthood woven together right there at the start, which is not the standard expectation at all. That blending is key.

And it carries on into his healing work, right? Matthew 4 mentions him proclaiming the kingdom, but also healing diseases, casting out demons. What's beneath the surface of those miracles? Well, the healings show him identifying very closely with human suffering, which, biblically speaking, is linked to sin. Okay.

So by undoing the effects of sin, disease, and brokenness in people's lives, he's giving a glimpse, a foreshadowing of his bigger work, dealing with the root cause of sin itself. Ah, I see. And notice where the news spreads.

Matthew mentions Gentile areas like Syria, the Decapolis. Right, outside the usual Jewish territory. Exactly.

It shows he's already starting to be that light to the nations from Isaiah 42.6. It hints at the later command to make disciples of all nations. But even with all that power, he doesn't exactly shout about it, does he? Matthew 12 says he pulls back, tells people not to make a big deal about who he is- why so low-key? That lines up perfectly with the First Servant song.

Isaiah 42 says the servant won't publicize himself, won't promote himself like a typical ruler. Instead, he shows this deep compassion, especially for the broken. The text says he won't crush the weak or hurting.

His main goal is salvation, establishing justice. It requires him to be this suffering servant, not a self-promoter. His power is shown quietly, gently, which is pretty radical.

Definitely a different kind of power. And then there's a transfiguration, Matthew 17, Loop 9, that amazing moment where his glory is revealed. Yes, a pivotal scene.

And God's voice speaks again, just like at the baptism, saying, Jesus is his son, well-pleased, chosen. Precisely. And that directly echoes Isaiah 42, verse 1 again, which uses both those terms, well-pleased and chosen, for the servant.

It's like God is underlining it. He is both the king and the servant. Wow.

Doubling down on that dual identity. Exactly. Royalty and servanthood fused together.

It really brings that first song to life in the New Testament narrative. So what you see across the Gospels is this mission champion of justice, ideal king, humble servant. It's woven through everything Jesus does and says.

Okay, that makes sense. Now, as we shift towards the second servant song in Isaiah 49, there's a bit of a gap in Isaiah's text between the first and second songs in there. The third and fourth seem to follow more closely.

Why the space? That's a really good question. And the gap is significant. In the chapters between Isaiah 42 and 49, the focus shifts temporarily to someone else.

Cyrus? Cyrus the Great. The Persian king. That's the one.

He's presented as God's immediate agent of salvation, the conqueror who lets the Jewish exiles return home. He sort of gets the ball rolling on God's plan. So Cyrus is obviously important historically, but he isn't the servant we're focused on.

How do we know? Right. He's not the servant. There's a pattern.

Isaiah talks about Cyrus, then he talks about the servant who's distinct and will bring the plan to its full completion. Then maybe more on Cyrus, then back to the servant. Okay, so Cyrus is like step one.

Kind of. He enables the physical return, but his work doesn't fulfill the huge spiritual vision of Isaiah's prophecy. It's just the start.

The focus has to shift back to the servant who will achieve the deeper, lasting restoration. Got it. So let's jump into Isaiah 49, verses 1 through 3. Now the servant himself is speaking.

Yes, the voice changes. And notice who he addresses immediately. Coastlands.

People who live far away. Ah, that global mission again, like in chapter 42? Exactly. He says he was summoned from birth, set apart for this role.

And then you get this imagery: he made my mouth like a sharp sword. He made me like a sharpened arrow. That sounds pretty warlike.

It does initially, but the interpretation often points towards him being the Lord's powerful spokesman. A prophet whose words are sharp, effective, penetrating like weapons. So, less about literal fighting, more about the power of his message.

That seems to be the idea. It suggests he's not just a king or just a prophet; he wears multiple hats, combining these roles. Okay, now here's a bit of a puzzle.

Verse 3. The Lord says to the servant, you are my servant, Israel. How does that work? If his job is to bring Israel back, how can you be Israel? Yeah, that verse has sparked a lot of discussion. It's a key point.

He's called Israel, but his task is to restore Jacob so that Israel might be gathered. So he's distinct from the nation he's restoring. Clearly distinct from the exiled nation, which Isaiah often describes as, frankly, disobedient and spiritually dull.

The servant seems to represent the ideal Israel. The one who perfectly fulfills God's purpose for the nation. Something the nation itself failed to do.

Like a true representative. Exactly. Think about Jesus' life mirroring some of Israel's story, like the flight to Egypt mirroring the Exodus.

But where Israel failed, like in the wilderness temptations, Jesus succeeds. He embodies the faithful remnant, the true Israel, who will fulfill the mission to the nations. So mission to the nations, but first, restore his own people, Jacob Israel.

And like you said, that global scope keeps getting emphasized. It's not a minor task. Not at all.

And verse 7 gives us another big clue about his journey. He's despised and rejected by nations, a servant of rulers. Oof.

That definitely points towards hardship. It prepares us for the suffering themes in the later songs, definitely. Even while it promises that eventually kings will recognize him and bow down.

Humiliation first, then exaltation. And verse 8 calls him a covenant mediator for people. What does that mediator role entail? That's huge.

Well, the first song mentioned a covenant more broadly, maybe with the nations. Isaiah 49 zooms in. He's a covenant mediator specifically for Israel, Jacob.

To do what exactly? To rebuild the land and reassign the desolate property. But it's likely more than just physical restoration. It's about mending that broken relationship with God, establishing the basis for a renewed people.

It really sets the stage for a new covenant. Okay. And if you connect that to later in Isaiah, like chapter 55, you see this call for covenant renewal.

God promising mercy, forgiveness. And that forgiveness hinges on what this servant does, what he suffers. So when God says in Isaiah 55, my plans are not like your plans.

It's not just about God being mysterious. It's a promise that God's plan to save and forgive through this servant, unlike fragile human plans, will absolutely succeed. That makes sense.

One last thing from the second song: the servant telling prisoners, come out, guiding people to springs of water. That sounds very Exodus-like. It really does.

There's a strong connection there to a new Moses figure. Leading people out of bondage. Exactly.

A new kind of Exodus, a spiritual liberation. And since Moses didn't actually lead the people into the promised land. Joshua did that.

Right. So the servant also takes on aspects of a new Joshua, leading people into this new spiritual reality, bringing justice, rebuilding what was broken. He's not just one thing: prophet, king, priest, warrior.

He embodies all these crucial roles perfectly. Wow. Okay.

A deep dive into just these two songs. We've seen this incredible blueprint emerge from Isaiah. A figure who's both king and servant, prophet and sacrifice.

And we've traced how the New Testament seems to consistently point to Jesus as the one fulfilling these really specific ancient prophecies. From his birth, through his whole life and ministry. It really does underscore how interconnected the scriptures seem to be, revealing this cohesive, long-term divine plan.

The servant is the ideal Israel, doing what the nation couldn't, bringing salvation ultimately to everyone, but starting with his own people. Yeah. It's extraordinary.

It shows how God's plan unfolds in these complex ways, these multifaceted roles. And that these ancient words aren't just, you know, dusty relics. They feel alive, illuminating truth about leadership, about service, even about God's character.

Absolutely. So, thinking about all this, what stands out to you? How does seeing Jesus through this lens of the Isaiah servant songs maybe reshape your understanding of who he is? Or maybe even what real leadership, real service looks like today? That's the great question to ponder. There's always more to uncover, different angles to see.

Keep exploring.