

# Isaiah's Servant Songs, Session 2: The Servant of the Lord: Champion of Justice and Covenant Mediator (B)

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## Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Robert Chisholm provides a detailed exposition of Isaiah 42:1-9 (continued) and 49:1-13, focusing on the messianic fulfillment of the first Servant Song and the introduction of the second. Chisholm connects various Gospel accounts—such as Jesus' baptism, healing ministry, and the Transfiguration—to show how Jesus integrates the royal Davidic kingship with the humble character of the Spirit-endowed Servant. Additionally, the lecture explains how the Servant is called "Israel" to represent the "ideal Israel" who succeeds where the nation failed, acting as a "new Moses" and "new Joshua" to lead a new global exodus. Ultimately, the Servant's mission is presented as a covenant mediator who restores actual Israel and brings the light of salvation to all nations through his suffering.

## Outline

### I. Messianic Fulfillment of the First Servant Song in the New Testament (Isaiah 42:1-9 continued)

#### A. Simeon's Prophecy in Luke 2:28-32

1. Simeon, an aged prophet, was promised by the Lord that he would not die before seeing the Messiah.
2. Holding the infant Jesus, Simeon declares him "a light for revelation to the Gentiles."
3. This reference to "light" and "salvation" directly alludes to Isaiah 42:6-7 and Isaiah 49:6, identifying Jesus as the Servant from infancy.

#### B. Jesus' Baptism (Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11)

1. Identification with Sinners: Jesus is sinless but gets in line to be baptized by John to identify with repentant sinners and bear the effects of human sin.

2. Redemptive Foundations: This action connects with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, laying foundations for the new covenant (Matthew 26:28) and his redemptive sacrifice (Matthew 20:28).
3. Obedience as Righteousness: Jesus insists on baptism to "fulfill all righteousness," which Matthew defines as moral conduct aligned with God's will.
4. The Divine Announcement: As the Spirit descends like a dove, God declares, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
5. Royal-Servant Synthesis: This statement merges Psalm 2:7 (the Davidic King) with Isaiah 42:1 (the Spirit-endowed Servant), combining kingship and servanthood.

#### **C. Jesus' Early Healing Ministry (Matthew 4:23-25)**

1. Messianic Power: Jesus demonstrates authority over nature, disease, and the demonic world, waging a victorious spiritual battle against the devil.
2. Root Solution for Sin: Physical illness is presented as an ultimate consequence of human sin; by curing illnesses, Jesus foreshadows dealing with the root problem of sin.
3. Light to the Nations: News of his healing spreads to Syrian and Decapolitan regions inhabited by Gentiles, initiating his role as a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6) and foreshadowing the Great Commission.

#### **D. The Synagogue Proclamation in Nazareth (Luke 4)**

1. Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 ("The Spirit of the Lord is upon me..."), identifying himself as the Servant.
2. Though modern scholars often separate Isaiah 61 (Trito-Isaiah) from the four traditional Servant Songs, its themes of Spirit-empowerment and delivering the oppressed tie it directly to Isaiah 11, 42, and 49.

#### **E. Retreat and Gentle Ministry (Matthew 12:15-21)**

1. Jesus withdraws in the face of persecution, instructing those he healed not to publicize his works (the "messianic secret").
2. This behavior directly fulfills the first Servant Song: he does not promote himself as a conquering king, but ministers gently to the broken and vulnerable ("bruised reed" and "dim wick").

#### **F. The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9, Luke 9:28-36)**

1. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain to show a glorious preview of his second coming.
2. God's voice from the cloud declares Jesus as His Son in whom He is well-pleased (Matthew) and whom He has chosen (Luke).
3. Both accounts ground their words in Psalm 2:7 (Davidic King) and Isaiah 42:1 ("my chosen one" in whom He delights), once again bringing kingship, royalty, and servanthood together.

## **II. Structure and Context of the Second Servant Song (Isaiah 49:1-13)**

### **A. The Strategic Placement of the Songs**

1. Seven chapters separate the first Song (Isaiah 42) and the second (Isaiah 49).
2. The Role of Cyrus: The intervening chapters focus extensively on Cyrus the Persian as the immediate agent raised in 540 BC to deliver the exiles from Babylon.
3. Cyrus vs. The Servant: Cyrus is a conquering warrior king who begins God's program of redemption, whereas the Servant is a humble figure who brings God's redemptive plan to its ultimate culmination.

#### **B. The Servant's Self-Introduction (Isaiah 49:1-3)**

1. Universal Scope: The Servant speaks directly to the "coastlands" and "people far away," aware of his global impact.
2. Divine Call: He was summoned from birth and commissioned from his mother's womb specifically for this task.
3. Prophetic Weapons: God made his mouth like a "sharp sword" and the Servant like a "sharpened arrow" in His quiver.
4. Spokesman of Yahweh: Rather than representing military force, this weapon imagery depicts the powerful and effective nature of the Servant's prophetic word.

#### **C. The Identity of the Servant as the "Ideal Israel"**

1. In Isaiah 49:3, God calls the Servant "Israel, through whom I will reveal my splendor."
2. The Distinction from Exiled Israel: In Isaiah 49:5, the Servant's job is to restore Jacob/Israel to God.
3. Typology of Israel and Jesus: Actual exiled Israel (Jacob) was blind, deaf, and disobedient. Jesus is the "ideal Israel" who succeeds where the nation failed.
4. Wilderness Contrast: While actual Israel failed in the wilderness, Jesus overcame temptation in the wilderness by quoting Deuteronomy passages that originally addressed Israel's failures.

#### **D. The Dual Mission of the Servant (Isaiah 49:5-6)**

1. Immediate Task: Re-establishing the tribes of Jacob and restoring the remnant of Israel.
2. Universal Task: God states that restoring Israel is too small a task; the Servant is also made a "light to the nations" to bring divine deliverance to the remote regions of the earth.

#### **E. Opposition, Vindication, and Royal Bowing (Isaiah 49:4, 7)**

1. Sense of Failure: The Servant laments that he has "worked in vain" and "expended energy for nothing," foreshadowing opposition and lack of immediate results.
2. The Servant's Trust: He trusts that the Lord will vindicate and reward him.
3. Contrast of Status: The Servant is "despised and rejected by nations" and a "servant of rulers" (resembling Jesus standing before Herod and Pilate).
4. Ultimate Exaltation: Kings will eventually see the Servant and rise in respect, and princes will bow down in worship because of the faithful Lord who chose him.

### **III. The Covenant Mediator and the New Exodus (Isaiah 49:8-13)**

#### **A. Covenant Mediation (berit am)**

1. God helps the Servant on the "day of deliverance" and makes him a "covenant mediator for the people."
2. In Isaiah 49, this mediation focuses specifically on Jacob/Israel, bringing them back to the land and reassigning desolate properties (unlike the universal covenant focus in Isaiah 42).

#### **B. The Servant as a New Moses and Joshua**

1. The New Moses: The Servant delivers prisoners from dark dungeons and guides them to springs of water under God's compassionate protection, mimicking Moses leading the first Exodus.
2. The New Joshua: Since Moses died before entering the land, the Servant also acts as a "new Joshua" by leading them into the land, reassigning properties, and rebuilding.
3. Global Gathering: God's people return from all directions (north, west, and the land of Syene/Sinim), causing the sky, earth, and mountains to shout for joy.

### **IV. Theological Synthesis: Covenant Renewal and Forgiveness (Isaiah 55)**

#### **A. The Call to Covenant Renewal**

1. On the heels of the Servant's suffering, Isaiah 55 invites the thirsty to "buy wine and milk without money and without cost."
2. The Lord promises an unconditional covenantal relationship modeled on the reliable promises made to David.

#### **B. Divine Forgiveness and the Superior Plan of God**

1. The wicked are urged to repent and return to the Lord for free forgiveness.
2. The Basis for Mercy: God can show mercy and forgive because of the redemptive suffering of the Servant.
3. God's Superior Plan: "My plans are not like your plans... just as the sky is higher than the earth..." is not a generic text on God's incomprehensibility, but a promise of His superior plan to save and forgive.
4. Fulfillment of the Word: Like rain and snow, God's promise of redemption is sent to fulfill a specific, unstoppable purpose.