

Dr. Matthew S. Harmon, The Bible's Use of the Bible, Session 4, A Case Study, Isaiah 49 in Galatians 1.

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This is Dr. Matthew S. Harman and his teaching in the series, The Bible's Use of the Bible. This is session 4, A Case Study, Isaiah 49 in Galatians 1.

Welcome to our final session in our course on The Bible's Use of the Bible.

And in this final section, we will be doing a case study. And in particular, we will be looking at how Isaiah 49 is used in Galatians chapter one. And I'll just remind you that the content from this session is based on what you will find here in the book, How to Study the Bible's Use of the Bible, Seven Hermeneutical Choices for both the Old and New Testaments.

And this case study on Isaiah 49 in Galatians 1 is part of what's found in a chapter here in the book. It goes into even more detail than I can go into here in our session. And it also includes another case study on the use of Leviticus 19:18 and the command to love one's neighbor as oneself.

So I'll encourage you to check that out as well. So here we are. We're doing our case study in Galatians 1, the use of Isaiah 49.

And we're going to walk through just a step-by-step process of how to do this. And I'll emphasize that there are levels to this, right? There's the sort of full-blown scholarly in-depth approach where you chase every rabbit trail and turn over every stone and look at all the possibilities. But I don't want you to get lost in that because I think you can do this at even a basic level using a good English Bible translation and still benefit immensely from what you'll find.

So here's the process. We're going to start with step one, and that begins by identifying the allusion. Now sometimes it's rather obvious.

Other times it's more subtle, and you have to do a little bit more digging. And so here again is where I might suggest that a helpful reference tool is the Connecting Scripture New Testament that was recently published. Connecting Scripture New Testament is put out by the publishers of the Christian Standard Bible.

And if you go back into session one, you can see some of the features of this, but this does a great job of identifying many of those allusions for you. So you can kind of use it even to check your work if you suspect that you might have an allusion in view here, or even to just show you an allusion that you didn't fully recognize is in fact there. So that's a good, useful resource for you to check out.

Okay, so cross-reference tools can help us do that, and one of the starting points can be simply to highlight the overlap between the donor text and the receptive text. And so here

is our New Testament text. We're going to look at Galatians chapter 1, and in verses 15 through 17, Paul writes this. And so that's our receptor text, and I'm going to contend that this text in Galatians 1 contains an allusion to Isaiah chapter 49, verses 1 through 6. And what I've attempted to do in the slide that you see me is to show you the points of contact between Isaiah 49 and Galatians 1:15 and 16, using some of the different colors here.

I will note, for example, that you'll see next to Isaiah 49:1 through 6, in parentheses, it says LXX AT [Author's Translation]. That refers to the Septuagint, so the LXX stands for the Septuagint. The AT means that's my own translation, so the author's translation is what that refers to.

So I'm indicating that this is my own translation of the Greek Septuagint text that you're seeing here, and Paul, I would contend, is borrowing language from Isaiah 49 in the Septuagint. So let's look at this now. I've already read the Galatians 1 text.

Here is Isaiah 49:1-6. Listen. Hear me, O islands, pay attention, O nations. After a long time it shall stand, says the Lord, from my mother's womb.

So we see that phrase highlighted in red because it is also apparent there in Galatians 1. He called my name. That same verb, called, is also present in Galatians. And made my mouth like a sharp dagger, and under the shelter of his hand he hid me.

He made me like a chosen arrow, and in his quiver he sheltered me. And he said to me, You are my servant Israel, and in you I will be glorified. But I said, I have labored vainly, and I have given my strength in vain and for nothing.

Therefore my judgment is with the Lord, and my toil before my God. And now thus says the Lord, who formed me from the womb to be his own slave, or servant; you could translate that, to gather Jacob and Israel to him. I will be gathered and glorified before the Lord, and my God shall become my strength.

And he said to me, it is a great thing for you to be called my servant, so that you may set up the tribes of Jacob and turn back the dispersion of Israel. See, I have made you a light of nations, or light of Gentiles, that you may be for salvation to the end of the earth. So, what I'm trying to show here by these colors is that there are shared phrases between these two texts.

And when we looked at this earlier in terms of horizontal and vertical context, one of the things that we talked about was to pay attention to the surrounding verses and paragraphs and chapters. And you'll notice here that Paul refers in verse 16 to God revealing his son in me. And if you're reading out of most English translations, you will see that they typically say something like revealed his son to me.

But the reason that I'm translating that as in me is because the Greek expression there is more naturally understood as in me rather than to me. There are many ways that you can use the expression to reveal something to someone, but the way that Paul words it here is not one of those common ways of doing it. So instead, what Paul seems to be saying is that God's purpose was to reveal his son in Paul.

In other words, in his life, in his ministry, in the sphere of Paul's life, that was the context in which God was going to reveal his son. And I think that that is intentionally picking up language from Isaiah 49, verse 3, where God says to the servant, in you I will be glorified. Now you might think, okay, that's a pretty thin thread.

I mean, the preposition translated as in is pretty common, but I think there's something going on here because if you look later in Galatians chapter 1, verse 24, as Paul talks about how his reputation began to spread after he was preaching the gospel, he concludes that section by saying that the churches in Judea glorify God in me. Now again, some of those translations will just translate it as "glorify God because of me." And that makes sense in English, but that's not really what I think the underlying Greek text is emphasizing.

Because he's intentionally using that phrase to help you see that if God's purpose was to reveal his son in Paul, and now in verse 24, he's saying that the churches in Judea glorified God in me. So I think that's an intentional use of that language, and that stems from this expression here in Isaiah 49, verse 3. So the point is that Paul is saying the context of God revealing his son is his life and ministry. That's what he's getting at.

He's drawing that language from Isaiah 49. Now there are some additional correspondences in the broader context. For example, in chapter 1, verse 10, Paul writes, For am I now seeking the approval of people or of God, or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Now that's the term in Greek, *doulos*, and that can be translated in a variety of different ways. It can refer to a slave, or it can refer to a servant, but here's what's particularly striking about this word here. If you look at Isaiah 49, verse 3, where it says, he said to me, that's Yahweh speaking to the servant, you are my servant.

In the Septuagint, in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, that is the same term, *doulos*, as we find here in Galatians 1.10. What's unique about that is that typically all throughout Isaiah, when the servant is being talked about, a different Greek word is used, *pepi*, which also can mean servant, and in fact, if you look elsewhere in Isaiah, like in Isaiah 53, for example, it talks about the servant. The Septuagint uses the word *pepi* rather than *doulos*. In fact, this is the only place in Isaiah where *doulos* is used to refer to the servant, and so I think when Paul introduces himself as a servant of Christ, in verse 10, he's anticipating what he's about to talk about later in chapter 1, verses 15-16.

So there are additional resonances or echoes of this text elsewhere here in Galatians. Here's another example, actually two of them. Twice in Paul's letter here, he talks about the idea of running or laboring in vain, and strikingly, the servant in Isaiah 49:4 says this: I have labored in vain.

I have given my strength in vain and for nothing. So again, by itself, if this occurred in a vacuum, you might say, well, I don't know, is that really a connection? But when it's part of several other connections to that same text, it's building a larger case for Isaiah 49 seems to be on Paul's mind as he's talking about what he's saying to the Galatians. On other points of connection here, you notice in the green here in chapter 2, verse 2, where Paul talks about proclaiming the gospel among the Gentiles, the servant talks about in 49:6, that he is a light of the nations, and again, that term, nations or Gentiles, it's the same term in Greek, and

the translator has to make a decision, is it better understood in this context as nations or Gentiles, but it is the same underlying Greek term.

So, hopefully that's enough to help you see that there are good reasons to conclude that Paul is alluding to Isaiah 49. So that leads us to thinking about, okay, we need to go back and look at Isaiah 49. So step 2, so step 1 was identify the allusion, step 2 is study the donor text.

So we want to look at: are there any textual variants in the donor text? In other words, in Isaiah 49, are there any places where there's debate over the exact original wording of the Hebrew text or the Septuagint text, or are there significant differences between the Septuagint translation and the Hebrew text? And in this particular case, there really are not any issues to be concerned about here. So now we can move to the context, both horizontal and vertical. We need to explore and summarize insights from both the horizontal and vertical contexts, and then we're going to look at the reception.

In other words, are there other texts that use the donor text? So let's walk through this for Isaiah 49. As I mentioned, there are no textual variants that affect the allusion in Isaiah 49, so thankfully we don't have to dig into the weeds to deal with that. I will say in passing, even if you don't have training in the original languages to do that for yourself, you can find good help in the Net Bible notes.

If you look at the Net Bible, you can maybe even find these online: they have extensive notes that often deal specifically with textual issues that can give you at least a general sense, even as an English Bible reader, of what's going on there in terms of any potential textual variants. But nothing to deal with here. What about horizontal contexts? Well, the horizontal context, just within Isaiah, can be summarized, at least in my mind, like this.

God raises up an individual servant in Isaiah 49 to obey where Israel, the servant, failed. So where do I get this? Well, we've already read Isaiah 49:1-6, but Isaiah 42:1-6 sounds an awful lot like what we find in Isaiah 49. So here's Isaiah 42, starting in verse 1. Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights.

I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street.

A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench. He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his law.

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it. I am the Lord. I've called you in righteousness.

I will take you by the hand and keep you. I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations. So you read that, and especially with your sort of New Testament mind working, your inclination might be to say, oh, that's referring to the Messiah.

And you might be even more encouraged to think that way because in Matthew's Gospel he quotes this section of Isaiah and says that it's fulfilled in Jesus. And so you're thinking, okay,

this is referring to the Messiah. But then you keep reading on in Isaiah 42, and then you come across this.

Isaiah 42 verses 18 and 19. Hear you deaf, and look you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but my servant? Or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one? Or blind as the servant of the Lord? You go, uh-oh.

I don't think that's Jesus. And so what's going on here? I would suggest to you that within the context of Isaiah, Isaiah 42, the description of the servant is a description of what Israel as a nation was supposed to be. That this was who Israel as a nation was supposed to be.

But then if you're asking, well, wait a minute, then why does Matthew say that this is fulfilled or points to Jesus? And I would say that he is claiming that based on the typological connection between Israel as God's son or God's servant here and Jesus as the ultimate servant. So we need to distinguish that and say, look, this is not Matthew getting it wrong. It's just him looking at this text with a different connection point.

And he's not mistaken in making that identification. But what I'm showing you here is to try to say, look, just within the context of Isaiah, Isaiah 42, I would suggest, is saying this is who Israel was supposed to be but failed. And so the rest of the chapters that follow continue to highlight how Israel has failed as Yahweh's servant until you get to Isaiah 49.

And then Isaiah 49 takes up some of that same language that's supposed to describe Israel and says it's true of this individual servant who will come later down the road. Now there's a lot to unpack in that, and that's, just to be honest, there are scholars who would disagree with my reading of Isaiah there, but I'm also not alone in making that case. So my point is, you don't have to necessarily agree with that, but I do think that that provides some horizontal context that the flow in Isaiah is: Israel is God's servant that has failed.

So God raises up an individual servant who's going to obey where Israel failed, and he's going to end up doing that through his suffering and ultimately through his vindication, which gets picked up in Isaiah 50 and then again in Isaiah 52 and 53. So that's what I would argue is the horizontal context. What about vertical context? Conceptually, I would say that the vertical context points us in this direction: that this is part of a pattern of God raising up a series of individual servants with royal, priestly, and prophetic roles to create a servant people.

And so you see that with, I would say, Adam, with Moses, Joshua, David, and of course ultimately with Jesus himself. And so it's part of this ongoing pattern that's present that points us in that direction. One piece of evidence of that is that in Isaiah 40 up through Isaiah 53, the term servant is always singular, even if it refers to the nation of Israel, a collective group of people, until you get to Isaiah 54, and the individual servant has accomplished the redemption of God's people.

And then in Isaiah 54, you get this line of how this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. The first plural occurrence and the picture that emerges here is that the work of the individual servant has now created a servant people. Lastly, we want to ask, is there any other place where this language gets picked up? And one possibility here is in Jeremiah

chapter 1 verse 5. In fact, some people think instead that Paul is drawing on Jeremiah 1:5 when he talks about God raising him up or calling him from his mother's womb.

And I certainly won't deny that there's similar language there. I just think that the other additional allusions and echoes in the context of Galatians 1 back to Isaiah 49 create the stronger link. And it's certainly possible that Jeremiah is drawing on Isaiah's language here.

Can't say that for sure, but it's certainly possible. In the New Testament, we have a very clear usage of Isaiah 49 and an important key point in Acts 13. Acts 13, verses 46 through 48, we find this.

Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, it was necessary that the Word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust aside and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

That's Isaiah 49.6. And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. Now what's especially important about this usage here is that Paul is using this text to explain and give the rationale for his mission.

Like this is his purpose. This is what God has called him to do. And isn't that exactly what we see in Galatians 1, when Paul is talking about God's transforming power in his life and his commission on his life? He's going back to Isaiah 49.

So there's precedent elsewhere for Paul explaining the significance of his ministry through the lens of Isaiah 49. So we shouldn't be surprised that we see that also here in Galatians 1. Okay, so that's the first two steps. Identify the illusion, study the donor text.

Now we need to study the receptor text. In other words, Galatians 1. We're going to go through the same process essentially. Textual, identifying variants.

We're going to look at the context, horizontal and vertical. So thankfully, once again, on the textual front, there are no major variants that affect the illusion. Now there are some textual variants there in Galatians 1:15 and 16, but they don't affect the presence of the illusion.

So we can, for now, pass over those. What about horizontal context? Well, in terms of the surrounding argument, what we see here is that this is part of Paul's defense of his apostolic authority and his relationship to the leadership in the Jerusalem church. And we've already highlighted how there are additional echoes and allusions to Isaiah 49 in the surrounding context.

So it's important for us to keep those in mind. Lastly, vertical context. Are there any other allusions in the neighborhood? There might be a potential allusion to Habakkuk 2:3 in Galatians 2:2. We've already pointed out the allusion to Isaiah 49:3 in Galatians 1:24, but here's a really important one.

In Galatians 2:20, we haven't highlighted this yet. In Galatians 2:20, Paul writes this: I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. There's that

phrase again, right? We saw that God's purpose was to reveal his Son in me, and now Paul is saying Christ who lives in me.

So I think that's an allusion back to Isaiah 49.3. And I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. And you'll notice I have that in blue there because I would contend that that's an allusion to language borrowed from Isaiah 53, where the servant gives himself for the sins of his people.

Because, you might have had this question sort of lingering in your mind, right? We said, well, Isaiah 49 talks about an individual servant who obeys where Israel fails. And so you're thinking, well, that's got to be Jesus. But you're hearing me saying, Paul is looking at Isaiah 49 and saying, that is anticipating my ministry.

And so I hope that that maybe causes a little bit of dissonance in your brain, and you're thinking, well, wait a minute, how does that work? So it is somehow Paul, the servant of Isaiah 49, and then Jesus is the servant of Isaiah 53. How does this come together? I think Galatians 2.20 is the key that unlocks this. Because what you have Paul saying here is, Christ lives in me.

And the significance of that is, Paul is, in some sense, the servant of Isaiah 49, but only because Christ lives in him. Because Christ is, in fact, the promised servant being talked about in Isaiah 49. And Christ lives in Paul to be a light of salvation to the nations.

That's the connection point. So I think Paul signals that by doing this here in Galatians 2.20, combining an allusion back to Isaiah 49.3, and an allusion to Isaiah 53, and putting that together for us. Okay, so step four, I've already kind of tipped my hand; I got ahead of myself, I got excited, but step four, identify the exegetical outcome.

So once you've put this all together, you want to try to figure out what the receptor text, in this case Galatians 2:20, is doing with the donor text in terms of exegetical outcomes. You're looking for the theological payoff, the sort of the so what. What does this matter? And here's where I would point you to in our book, *How to Study the Bible's Use of the Bible*, on pages 69 through 72, we've got a list of about a dozen different common exegetical outcomes.

In other words, common ways that later biblical authors use earlier biblical texts. And so how would I summarize what I think Galatians, what Isaiah here in Galatians? Let's try to summarize it like this. In short, Paul's use of Isaiah can best be described as a form of indirect fulfillment.

He sees his call to be an apostle to the Gentiles prefigured in the specific language of the Isaianic servant's call in Isaiah 49:1 through 6. As Paul reflected on his encounter with the risen Jesus in light of the Old Testament scriptures, he saw within Isaiah 49 his own ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles anticipated both in specific phrases as well as the broader scope of what the servant was commissioned to do: bring the good news of Yahweh's salvation to the Gentiles, even to the ends of the earth. Continuing, Paul sees himself as the servant of Isaiah 49 because Jesus, the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, lives within him to fulfill the servant's mission. In reading Isaiah 49 this way, Paul appears to have picked up on

the interrelationship between individual identity and responsibility and collective identity and responsibility noted above.

Jesus as the servant has produced servants just as Isaiah had foretold. Here is where I would just add on to that and say, because Paul understands himself as being sort of anticipated in Isaiah 49 because Jesus, the servant, dwells in him, well that's true of us as the church. Christ lives in us, and therefore he lives in us in order to fulfill the larger mission of being a light of salvation to the ends of the earth.

And so is Paul unique in some sense? Yes, he's sort of a pioneer apostle to the Gentiles. And yes, we can rightly see ourselves in this as well as the church because we are the place where Christ dwells and through whom he works in order to be a light of salvation to the nations. So that's a taste.

I feel like I've barely scratched the surface even of what's really in there. If you look in chapter 8 of the *How to Study the Bible's Use of the Bible*, there's much more detail in there. I also want to point you to some additional resources connected with this book.

You can find it at [otuot.com slash 7c](http://otuot.com/slash/7c), where you'll find some additional articles and videos and some interviews if you want to go a bit deeper. But my hope is that this has been enough to whet your appetite and get you excited about the insights you might be able to draw, and yet also give you enough of a head start, enough of a nudge with some tools and some things to think about to go explore Scripture for yourself. And if that has happened, then this has been a success.

So I invite you now to take what we've talked about in these sessions and go back into the scriptures and hopefully read them with fresh eyes so that you can see what is legitimately there that perhaps you've never fully seen or forgotten.

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