

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

ISAIAH 49:1-10, 22



LESSON: A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES —May 17, 2020

INTRODUCTION:

One of the main overall themes of the last few chapters of Isaiah has been the prophecy of the coming defeat of Babylon and the return of the Jewish captives back to Israel. This chapter continues with the same focus. God again makes it clear that Cyrus is "His man" and that it is by God's power that Cyrus will be able to destroy Babylon. God reminds the people yet again that no idol foretold the coming of Cyrus or foretold the destruction of Babylon. Because God's prophecies always come true, this is a case for God's divinity. Here the Jews are exhorted (lifted up) to leave Babylon behind and return home.

Now why did the Jews need to be exhorted to leave Babylon? Surely they would want to escape their captors? You must remember that the Jews had been living in Babylon for 70 years now - this is not the same generation that had been taken into captivity. These are the children and grandchildren. Some of the Jews are quite wealthy and well off now - why would they want to return to dirty, unsophisticated Jerusalem and start over? They liked the luxuries and privileges of Babylon, and will probably like it even more under the governing of the Persians. Once again, God is reminding the Jews of how He took care of them in the past, during the Exodus, when they were wandering in the desert with no water. The last thing God leaves with them is: *"you can have peace, if you obey Me."*

This is a prophecy of Christ—Jehovah's Servant! The Servant of the Lord takes center stage. In the first half of this Servant Song, Isaiah 49:1-6, we see the Servant in dialogue with the Lord. The Servant speaks (verses 1 and 2); the Lord responds (verse 3); the Servant speaks again (verse 4); the Lord responds again (verses 5 and 6).

LESSON: I. THE MESSIAH AS THE SERVANT OF THE LORD ISAIAH 49:1-4

49:1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. In the previous chapter we saw that God was only speaking to the Jews, particularly to the Jews in exile. Now the audience has changed and the Servant is speaking for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike. **"Listen to me, you islands (coastlands); hear this, you distant nations:"** He testifies how the Lord had called Him and prepared Him for His task. In this section of Isaiah's prophecy, the Servant is personalized and identified as the One whom the Lord has called **from the womb** and the One whom He has called by name. This is none other than the virgin-born Immanuel Himself ¹Jesus' name and office was given to Him before He was even born, first to His mother Mary (*Read Luke 1:31-33*); then later to His stepfather Joseph (*Read Matthew 1:20-21*), then to the world. How that must have bewildered His parents to be told by God that Jesus was to *"save His people from their sin!"*

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49:2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;— His mouth is described like a sharp sword, a description often used of Christ, but never of Israel. The Lord hid His servant indicating the Lord's care and protection. We have two general images here of the Servant: The **first image** of a weapon: **like a sharp sword**. The author of Hebrews refers to the Word of God being like a sword (*Read Hebrews 4:12-13*). Therefore, the Words of Jesus pierce the hearts of people as no other words can, deep into the soul, where it won't be hard to forget them. This image of a sword coming out of the Lord's mouth is repeated five times in "Revelation" (*Read Revelation 1:16*). The **second image** is that the Servant **will be hidden**. This indicates that the Servant will be protected from His enemies and is not revealed until the proper time. Jesus' true purpose and calling was hidden even from His disciples, from everyone, really, until after the resurrection. Once His true purpose was revealed, then the arrow of His words would be even more effective, and would no longer rest unused in the quiver.

49:3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. The Servant announces what the Lord said unto Him, revealing His identity: **And He said to me, You are my Servant, O Israel, in whom I will show my glory.** Christ takes the place of Israel as the true Servant of God, though He is called **my servant, O Israel**. He fulfills what Israel should have done. The Servant will succeed where the Jews failed. In His Person and Work, He exemplifies the nation. The Servant will be the instrument in how God will be glorified (*Read John 17:1-5*). In verse 4 of that chapter it tells us how Jesus brought glory to God, "by completing the work He gave Him to do."

49:4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. As this is foreseen in the Book of Isaiah, the Servant shows the humanity of His flesh saying He **laboured in vain, and spent His strength for nought**. *The first call:* to bring back Jacob and gather Israel, has apparently not worked well. At some point, He became disheartened because Israel was rejecting His words. He felt as if He poured Himself out to no effect. We are to take note for there are certainly times when we may find ourselves in similar situations. The second half of this verse says, "**Yet**", meaning don't stay there. **...surely my judgment (verdict) is with the Lord, and my work (labor) with my God.** This is the affirmation of faith. It may look like God has abandoned His Servant. It may look like there is no way out. It may even look like the story has come to an end. But, the Servant makes a leap of faith. He decides that the promises of God are more important than His current circumstances. He decides to trust God, even when it looks like He doesn't have any reason to trust God. Yet, He turns to the Lord and renews His confidence in Him. Israel was supposed to be ruling over the nations, but instead the nations were ruling over her. Therefore, The Messiah will be used to restore the "preserved" ones of Israel—those who had been preserved by the Lord for this very purpose.

The best thing we can do to prepare for what God has for us next is to draw close to Him through the Word and prayer. In this way He sharpens and polishes us. He doesn't seem to be in any hurry. Preparation takes time. It may feel that nothing much is happening in your life right now, that you're not really being used by God. Perhaps you've moved forward in certain ways, but doors have closed. Perhaps the timing is wrong. Perhaps now is the time for preparation, when you need to be drawing close to Him. Perhaps the Lord is sharpening and polishing you.

II. THE MESSIAH AS THE SAVIOUR OF ALL PEOPLES ISAIAH 49:5-10

49:5 And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again

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to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. God speaks, and reaffirms His relationship with His Servant. The Servant has a two-fold mission from the Lord **who formed** (*yotseriy, meaning to fashion or ordain*) Him **from the womb** to be His Servant. He has loved Him before He even entered the world. God has called His servant to be a part of the work that He is doing. And His mission is **to bring Jacob again to Him** and to restore the preserved of Israel. This first aspect of His assignment is to the House of Israel and to the believing remnant of Israel in particular. As Christians we often forget that Christianity came out of Judaism. Jesus was a Jew. His first 12 apostles were Jews. The original church was a church of Jews. When Peter preaches his first sermon at Pentecost, he preaches to Jews (*Read Acts 2:1-12, 36-41*). Though the Servant would be rejected by the nation, yet He would be honored by God. He would not only approve His character and work, but God would be His strength.

49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. God tells His Servant **This is a light (small) thing for You to be My Servant...** But God goes on to say, it is not just enough for the Jews to be raised up (**the tribes of Jacob**) and **restore the preserved of Israel** in right relationship, but in the eyes of the Lord, He loves the Gentiles as well. In addition, The Messiah is also commissioned to be a **light to the Gentiles**. Why all this? So that **My salvation may reach to the end of the earth**. The Messiah would not simply **bring** salvation; He would **be my salvation to the ends of the earth**. The Messiah shall be glorified in the conversion of the Gentiles, and God will use His chosen people to bless all the nations of the earth.

49:7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. God is concerned about **the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and the Holy One** whom man **despises** (rejects) and whom the nation **abhors** (hates). He is ²being treated like a servant, being spitefully used and crucified by the rulers of both of the Jews and Romans, which was then a kind of punishment inflicted only on slaves or servants. However, Kings will see Him and stand up, and princes will bow down and worship **because the Lord is faithful** to His promises and the Holy One of Israel was chosen to be the One.

49:8 Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;—This verse is spoken in 1 Corinthians 6:2. In the restoration of Israel the Lord says there is an acceptable (favorable) time, season: season of grace that the Lord hears and answers. And in the Day of Salvation He will help and preserve Israel and give a covenant to the people, to restore the land, and reassign it to inherit the desolate heritages. People will return to possess the land.

49:9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. The Lord says **to the prisoners** (*those bound*) **go forth** (*come out*) and to those **in darkness, show yourself** (*be free*). On every roadway they shall graze, and they shall find pasture even on bare hills.



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49:10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. They shall neither hunger nor thirst. Nor will the fierce sun beat upon them with its heat, **for He that has mercy (compassion) on them will lead them, and shall guide them by springs of water.**

III. THE MESSIAH AS THE BRINGER OF PEACE ISAIAH 49:22

49:22 Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. The Lord says **He will lift up** (raise) **His hand to the Gentiles** (nations), and **set up a standard to the people** (lift up His signal). Their sons shall be brought in their arms, and their daughters carried on their shoulders.

SUMMARY:

V1The Servant says, "*Listen to me...*" The Father says of Jesus in Mark 9:7, "*This is my beloved Son, listen to him!*" The Servant addresses the "islands," the "peoples from afar." He's speaking not to Israel but to the Gentile nations. He's speaking as to when He was called. The Servant is called and named from the womb. The angel told Mary, "*And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus*" (Luke 1:31). **V2**The Servant's mouth is like a sharp sword, as He fights God's war with His Words. His Word is effective, accurate, particularly when aimed at distant targets. The Lord has "*made Him this way, and He made Him this way while concealing Him 'in the shadow of His hand' and while hiding Him 'in His quiver.'*" The Lord prepares the Servant for His task, and that preparation involves intimacy with Him. Intimacy with the Lord sharpens the sword and makes the arrow a select one. The Apostle John, speaking of Jesus, says, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). **V3**"*The Lord said Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*" **V4** "*Then the Servant said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God*" (**49:1-4**).

V5God speaks, and reaffirms His relationship with His Servant. God is the one who formed His servant in the womb – He has loved Him before He even entered the world. God has called His servant to be a part of the work that He is doing, and God will be His strength as He carries out that work. None of this has changed. **V6**But now God gives an even more difficult task: to serve as a light to the Gentiles. The Word of God must now extend beyond Israel to all peoples to the end of the earth. The Servant will be the one chosen to proclaim that message. The Servant is confident in the wisdom and power of the Lord where Israel was not. He trusts Himself to the Lord. He expects the Lord to vindicate Him. **V7**The Lord says the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "*Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.*" **V8** In the restoration of Israel the Lord says there is an acceptable (favorable) time that the Lord hears and answers, and in the Day of Salvation He will help. He preserved Israel and gave a covenant to the people, to restore the land, to reassign it to inherit the desolate heritages. People will return to possess the land. **V9** The Lord says to the prisoners (those bound) go forth



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(come out) and to those in darkness, show yourself (be free). On every roadway they shall graze, and they shall find pasture even on bare hills. **V10** They shall neither hunger nor thirst. Nor will the fierce sun beat upon them with its heat, for He that has mercy (compassion) on them will lead them, and shall guide them by springs of water. **(49:5-10)**.

The Lord says He will lift up (raise) His hand to the Gentiles (nations), and set up a standard to the people (lift up His signal). Their sons shall be brought in their arms, and their daughters carried on their shoulders. **(49:22)**.

APPLICATION:

The Servant's mission in the world was to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel. His work extended to be a light to the Gentiles. Jesus paid the ultimate price no one could ever repay.

Our mission to the world is to tell what Jesus had done for all of us and live that life before others! What Jesus did on the cross can never be repaid, can never be reciprocated, not even duplicated! There is a song with the lyrics: *"I'll never know how much it cost to see my sins upon that cross."* You see, there is only "One Messiah" who could do such a thing! There was only "One way" He did it!

