

The Servant's Song

Isaiah 42

By Scott Huckaby

6/11/2023

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

Isaiah 42:1-9 – The LORD speaks of His Servant (NIV)

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. ² He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. ³ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; ⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.” ⁵ This is what God the Lord says—the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: ⁶ “I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, ⁷ to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. ⁸ “I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols. ⁹ See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

v1 – To whom is the Lord speaking?

Behold! My Servant: The LORD calls to all people — the people of Israel, and the coastlands — and tells them to behold (study, set focus upon) His Servant.

About whom is the Lord speaking?

My Servant: The word ebed can refer to a slave (Exodus 21:20-21) or a vassal king (2 Samuel 10:19), an individual subject (Genesis 21:25) or a tributary nation (1 Chronicles 18:2, 6, 13). In all those cases the term refers to a person or group characterized by dependence and servitude.

- The New King James Version rightly capitalizes Servant because the context demonstrates this is a clear reference to Jesus.
- Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-5 and plainly says it is a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 12:16-21).
- Jesus described Himself as a servant in Matthew 20:25-28, Matthew 23:11, Mark 9:35, Mark 10:43-45. He is The Servant.

How is it God upheld His Servant?

My Servant whom I uphold: When someone is the servant of another, the servant is required to give full service and obedience to the master. But the master is also required to take care of the servant.

Why is the Messiah referred to as My Elect One?

That is what Messiah means... God's anointed. Jesus is the ultimate Elect One, chosen by the Father.

How are we like Jesus elect?

Ephesians 1:4-5 – *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself*
Yes, though that doesn't take us off the hook for responding to Him; our free will must be exercised.

Since we are elect, does that mean God delights in us?

Understanding this helps us to receive God's favor, instead of trying to give Him a reason to delight His soul in us! Many of us are trying to earn the approval of God, instead of realizing it is His free gift, received by faith, because He has chosen — elected — to delight His soul in us.

What does it mean God put His Spirit upon Him?

Jesus was filled with the Spirit and did ministry in the power and flow of the Holy Spirit...

Matthew 3:16 – *When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him*

How is it the Messiah will bring forth justice to the Gentiles?

The ministry of the Servant, the Messiah, would not be restricted to the Jewish people. He would also have a ministry to the Gentiles, bringing justice and righteousness to them.

v2 – What does it mean *He will not cry out, nor raise His voice*?

This doesn't mean that Jesus never spoke loudly. It refers to His gentle, lowly heart and actions. Jesus didn't make His way by bluster and loud, overwhelming talk, but by the Spirit of God upon Him.

Isaiah 53:7 – *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.*

Indeed, this was literally fulfilled...

Matthew 27:12-14 – *And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.*

v3 – What does it mean that, *a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench*?

This is another reference to the gentle character of Jesus. A reed is a fairly fragile plant, yet if a reed is bruised, the Servant will handle it so gently that He will not break it. And if flax, used for tinder to start a fire, does not flame but only smokes, He will not quench it into extinguishing. Instead, the Servant will gently blow on the smoking flax, fanning it into flame again.

What does this tell us about how God deals with our weaknesses and failures?

He deals with them gently, tenderly, helping them along until the bruised reed is strong and the smoking flax is in full flame.

- As Christians we are often far more smoke than fire: so little prayer, so little real testimony, so much depression and discouragement. But the Lord says He will not extinguish the smoking flax.

What does it mean *He will bring forth justice for truth*?

The Servant is gentle, but not weak. Ever notice how truth has a way of becoming known eventually? God makes sure of it. Likewise, justice will be served in the end. God will make sure of it.

v4 – Why is it Jesus never gets discouraged?

When we think of the job that He has to do, the obstacles He must overcome, and the tools He needs to work with, it is amazing that He never becomes discouraged. It is because He has all power and authority.

When will God *establish justice in the earth*?

The Millennial Kingdom... the work of the Servant will extend to the whole earth, and all the peoples — even those in the distant coastlands — shall serve Him.

v5 – What are God's credentials we're reminded of here?

He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is living. And He is the giver of breath and spirit.

What does it mean that God stretched out the heavens?

The universe is expanding as astronomers have observed. This idea is mentioned several other times in Scripture...

- Isaiah 44:24 – “. . . *I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens . . .*”
- Isaiah 45:12 – “*My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.*”
- Jeremiah 10:12 – “*God . . . stretched out the heavens by his understanding.*”
- Jeremiah 51:15 – “*He founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.*”

Does an expanding universe reinforce the big bang theory?

The fact that the universe is expanding gave rise to the big bang theory.

- Although science only discovered less than a hundred years ago that the universe is expanding, the men who wrote the Bible included the concept in the Scriptures almost 3,000 years ago.
- The big bang theory actually supports creation. The prevailing theory is that nothing at all existed prior to the Big Bang. At the moment of the Big Bang—the moment of creation—time and matter began.
- If the universe is currently expanding, then, at some time in the distant past, the universe had a beginning.

How does the fact that the galaxies are accelerating in their expansion better support biblical creation?

If the big bang was some mighty explosion, all matter expansion should be slowing down due to gravity. But that is not what astronomers have observed so there is the theory of dark matter which seeks to explain what is actually happening.

How does the fact that all galaxies are expanding away from our milky way galaxy support biblical creation?

This puts the earth essentially in the center of the universe making it a uniquely special place... just as the Bible represents it.

- Secular scientists uncomfortable with this evidence have to explain it away with the theory of the curvature of space... like galaxies on an expanding balloon... from the perspective of any place on the balloon, all other points will appear to be expanding away.

Is science an enemy of the Bible?

Science is not... ungodly scientists are...

1 Timothy 6:20 – *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called*

v6 – Who is God speaking to here?

I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand: Specifically, this is a promise from the Father to the Servant — Jesus Christ. Jesus must have received remarkable encouragement from passages like this when He faced difficult and trying times during His earthly ministry.

How was Jesus a covenant to the people?

He gave us the New Covenant... The promise that God will forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him. Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, and His death on the cross is the basis of the promise...

Luke 22:20 – *This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.*

What was the Old Covenant?

The Old Covenant that God had established with His people required strict obedience to the Mosaic Law. Because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), the Law required that Israel perform daily sacrifices in order to atone for sin.

- But Moses, through whom God established the Old Covenant, also anticipated the New Covenant. In one of his final addresses to the nation of Israel, Moses looks forward to a time when Israel would be given “*a heart to understand*” (Deuteronomy 29:4, ESV).
- Moses predicts that Israel would fail in keeping the Old Covenant (verses 22–28), but he then sees a time of restoration (Deuteronomy 30:1–5). At that time, Moses says, “*The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live*” (verse 6).

How is the New Covenant superior to the Old?

We are no longer under the Law but under grace (Romans 6:14–15). The Old Covenant has served its purpose, and it has been replaced by “a better covenant” (Hebrews 7:22).

Hebrews 8:6 – *In fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises*

Under the New Covenant, we are given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift (Ephesians 2:8–9). Our responsibility is to exercise faith in Christ, the One who

fulfilled the Law on our behalf and brought an end to the Law’s sacrifices through His own sacrificial death.

How was Jesus a light to the Gentiles?

National Israel rejecting Jesus as Messiah prompted God to invite the Gentiles to His table...

Acts 15:14 – *Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.*

The parable of the Great Banquet Luke 14:15-24 revealed the Lord’s plan to bring others to His table when the original invitees rejected Him.

v7 – What would the Messiah do?

Open the eyes of those who had been blind to God and free those who are slaves to sin...

John 8:34 – *Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.*”

The analogy of a slave and his master to make the point that a slave obeys his master because he belongs to him. Slaves have no will of their own. They are literally in bondage to their masters.

- When sin is our master, we are unable to resist it. But, by the power of Christ to overcome the power of sin, “*You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness*” (Romans 6:18).

v8 – What is the significance of God telling us, *I am the Lord, that is My name?*

This is the famous tetragrammaton, or name of four letters, which we write Jehovah, Yehovah, Yahweh, etc. The letters are Y H W H. The Jews never pronounce it, and the true pronunciation is utterly unknown.

Can anyone besides God fulfill His promises?

My glory I will not give to another: No one else can fulfill God’s promises, because God will not share His glory with any other.

But doesn’t the Son of God share the glory of God the Father?

Jesus does share in the glory of the Father. He prayed, *And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was* (John 17:5). If God the Son and God the Father each share glory, and the LORD shares His glory with no one, it means that the Father and the Son are the LORD God. The LORD God — Yahweh — is one God in Three Persons.

v9 – What else does God declare about Himself here?

Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare: God is master of both the past (*the former things*) and the future (*new things*).

- Being the master of both the future and the past, God has the present well in hand also.

Isaiah 42:10-17 – Song of Praise to the Lord

¹⁰ *Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them.* ¹¹ *Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops.* ¹² *Let them give glory to the Lord and proclaim his praise in the islands.* ¹³ *The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.* ¹⁴ *“For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant.* ¹⁵ *I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools.* ¹⁶ *I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.* ¹⁷ *But those who trust in idols, who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’ will be turned back in utter shame.*

v10-12 – Why sing to the LORD a new song?

This sounds like a Psalm of praise (Psalm 33:3, 40:3, 98:1, and others). Who the Servant is and what He does is so glorious, it has to bring out a new song of praise.

Who should sing this new song?

You coastlands and you inhabitants of them: Everyone who has been touched by the work of the Servant. Since even the distant places of the coastlands were blessed by the Servant (Isaiah 42:4), they should praise Him as well.

v13 – Why is the Lord referred to as a mighty man?

Jesus is both God and man... His day of praise is a day of victory for the LORD over all false gods. He shall prevail against His enemies.

He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war.... He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud: The LORD does this work of judgment with energy. He isn't passive or dispassionate in His judgment. When the LORD sets things right on the earth, He does it with zeal.

v13-14 – What is the difference between the Lord crying out here and not raising His voice (Isaiah 42:2)?

This shows the difference between the First and Second Coming of Jesus. The first coming was meek and lowly; the Second Coming will be loud and demonstrative.

v15-17 – How would God shame the idolators?

I will lay waste the mountains and hills: No obstacle can get in the way of the LORD's work. Mountains and hills can't get in His way. Rivers and pools will not stop Him. Even the blindness of others will not prevent His plan. In the end, it is certain that they shall be greatly ashamed, who trust in carved images.

Isaiah 42:18-25 – Israel Blind and Deaf

¹⁸ *“Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see!* ¹⁹ *Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the Lord?* ²⁰ *You have seen many things, but you pay no attention; your ears are open, but you do not listen.”* ²¹ *It pleased the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious.* ²² *But this is a people plundered and looted, all of them trapped in pits or hidden away in prisons. They have become plunder, with no one to rescue them; they have been made loot, with no one to say, “Send them back.”* ²³ *Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention in time to come?* ²⁴ *Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law.* ²⁵ *So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.*

v18-19 – Who are the deaf and the blind the LORD speaks to here?

They are the deaf and blind among God's people. The LORD has already spoken to the blind among the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:16). Now, He speaks to the blind that He calls My servant, the deaf whom He calls My messenger.

- Obviously, a blind man will have trouble being a good servant. A deaf man will have trouble being a good messenger.

How is it God's people may be deaf and blind?

They allow themselves to be so much in the world that they are deaf and blind to eternal, spiritual matters. They become just like people who do not know the Lord.

v20 – What is the problem with the blind among God’s people?

Seeing many things, but you do not observe: This is a word to these blind ones who think they can see. They act as if they can see, but they really can’t observe anything. They will stay blind and deaf as long as they can’t admit their need.

What is the cure for God’s people who are deaf and blind?

It begins with knowing our condition. When the deaf know they are deaf, and the blind know they are blind, they know their need, and do not deceive themselves about their condition.

When Jesus healed a man born blind, He used the occasion to speak about spiritual blindness and its cure. In the diagnosis of Jesus, only those who know they are blind can be healed of their blindness...

John 9:39-41 – *Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.” Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.*

v21 – What will the Lord do?

The LORD is well pleased...He will exalt the law and make it honorable: The LORD God is pleased to bring this justice on the earth, and to exalt and honor the law.

What is the role of the Law in light of the New Covenant?

Though under the new covenant, we do not come to God on the basis of the law, it does not mean that the law of God is bad.

Romans 7:12 – *Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*

The weakness of the law is not in the law, but in us. The law perfectly suits the purpose God intended for it: to display God’s holy standard, to expose our sin, and to show us the need for salvation in Jesus.

v22 – Why does God have mercy on us?

But this is a people robbed and plundered: God looks upon His people and sees the pain and devastation the world, the flesh, and the devil has wrought upon them. They are robbed and plundered, they are for prey, and no one delivers. Worst of all, no one says, “*Restore!*”

v23 – Whom is God seeking?

Those who will hear Him and look forward with Him for *the time to come.*

v24-25 – What lesson can we learn from Israel?

Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, He against whom we have sinned? In this circumstance, God allowed the low, defeated place of Israel as discipline for their sin, for their chosen blindness and deafness.

For they would not walk in His ways, nor were they obedient to His law: The painful and low place of Israel was meant to draw them back to the LORD. We can know that the LORD only used these measures after He had exhausted far gentler measures. Yet even these sharp measures did not work: *Yet he did not know...Yet he did not take it to heart.*

How is it Jacob was set on fire all around?

his correction from the LORD felt like fire to Israel, yet they did not respond to it.

1 Peter 4:12, 17 – *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.... For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

What is God’s purpose in the fiery trial?

To bring us to repentance and softness of heart, and the more we resist that work, the more the fire will burn! We should respond as Peter said...

1 Peter 4:19 – *Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*

Is the fire of God’s correction burning away the sin and impurity in your life, or is it just making you blacker and harder?

What applications come to mind from our discussion?

- We are the elect of God... we should act like it!
- God is never done with us despite our weaknesses and failures... every day is a new day with God.
- Astronomy reinforces biblical creation... don’t let the ungodly naysayers sway you.
- We are blessed to be under the New Covenant but the Law still has value.
- Don’t be a deaf and blind servant... draw near to the Lord so you may hear and see.