

God's Servant

April 6, 2014

I. Introduction:

A. BACKGROUND

There are a number of chapters in the book of Isaiah describing a person called "the Lord's servant." From these passages it's clear that God had chosen and charged Israel to be His servant, to glorifying Him among the nations. But Israel failed in this mission. So Isaiah introduces an individual who will serve Him as a Servant, who will accomplish the mission that God gives Him to do. Of course this person is Jesus Christ. The title "Servant" is one of the most significant names and titles of Jesus in the Old Testament, because there are so many chapters devoted to this theme in Isaiah.

B. God's Servant is found:

Isa 42:1 Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him;

Isa 49:3 He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, in Whom I will show My glory."

Isa 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Isa 52:13 Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

Isa 53:11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.

C. Servant of the Lord.

Servant is used about 800 times in the OT.

Servant can refer to:

- a slave (Jewish or Gentile)
- an officer close to the king
- the chosen leader of God's people.

This title "servant of the Lord", "My servant" or "His servant" is applied to:

- Abraham - Gen 26:24
- Jacob - Ezk 28:25;
- Job - Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7-8;
- Moses - (over 30 times) Ex 14:31; Dt 34:5; Jos 1:2, 13;
- Joshua and Caleb - Nm 14:24; Jos 24:29; Judg 2:8;
- David - (over 70 times) 2 Sam 7:26-29; Jer 33:21, 22, 26; Ezk 37:24)
- Hezekiah - 2 Chr 32:16
- Isaiah - Isa 20:3
- Zerubbabel - Hag. 2:23
- Prophets - 2 Ki 10:10; 14:25; 17:13; Am 3:7; Jer 7:25; 26:5
- Israel as a nation (a number of times) Isa 41:8-9

The Messianic title "Servant" is only used by Isaiah and Zechariah

- Isa 42:1; 49:3, 52:13; 53:11; Zec 3:8

II. A closer look at "Servant of God" in Isaiah

A. Isaiah sets the stage for the Messiah-servant's appearance by introducing:

Immanuel in chapter 7,
the Prince of Peace in 9,
the Branch in 11.

B. Summary - We can best understand this title of Christ in the Old Testament by summarizing the chapters in which the Servant appears.

Isa 42:1-3 The gentleness of the Servant

Isa 42:4-9 the mission of the Servant - God's Servant is to redeem the lost and release the captives.

Isa 42:10-13 the work of the Servant - He will give the peoples of the earth a new song to sing; a song of praise to the Lord.

Isa 42:14-25; Israel is presented as God's servant - Not only did Israel fail as God's servant, to do His will, but also she was completely unresponsive to His discipline.

Isa 43:1-13 Yet Israel is not to fear, for God will redeem His people

Isa 43:14-28 And God will blot out His people's sins.

Isa 49:1-7 God's servant is called from the womb. - He will bring Israel and the Gentiles back to God.

Isa 50:1-9 In contrast to disobedient Israel, God's Servant will be responsive to God even though His obedience brings suffering. In the end the Servant will be vindicated by the Lord Himself.

Isa 50:10 Those who rely on God will obey "the voice of His Servant" and in the name of the LORD"

Isa 52:13-53:12 This stunning prophetic passage not only describes the death of Christ on Calvary, but also makes its redemptive purpose utterly clear.

C. Isaiah has 4 servant songs:

1 - Isa 42:1-7 the call of the servant - His mission is to "bring forth justice to the nations" empowered by God's Spirit. This mission will not fail.

2 - Isa 49:1-7 the servant's mission becomes clearer through the Lord's commission to him. All peoples are called upon to pay attention to the one appointed as a light of salvation (v. 6).

3 - Isa 50:4-9 does not use the word "servant," but is considered the third servant song on the basis of vocabulary and context (some include also v 10-11). Here the servant introduces his method. Although he suffers as an obedient servant, his confidence remains in the Lord.

4 - Isa 52:13-53:12 The servant's method is expanded at 52:13-53:12 (the fourth song) by a report on his career. The scene is viewed from Jehovah's perspective (52:13-15; 53:12) and from the perspective of a shocked audience (53:1), probably both Israelites and Gentiles. The servant suffers for the sins of all, and as with the scapegoat, his suffering removes the sins of others (v 4-6, 12). His reward hints at resurrection (v 10-11). Surprise and dismay accompany the report.

D. The Servanthood of Jesus - revealed in Isaiah (by Robert T. France)

The Servant was chosen by the Lord (Isa 42:1; 49:1)
The Servant was endowed with the Spirit (Isa 42:1)
The Servant was taught by the Lord (Isa 50:4)
The Servant found His strength in God (Isa 49:2, 5)
It was the Lord's will that the Servant should suffer (Isa 53:10)
The Servant was weak, unimpressive, and scorned by men (Isa 52:14; 53:1-3, 7-9)
The Servant was meek (Isa 42:2)
The Servant was gentle (Isa 42:3)
The Servant suffered willingly (Isa 50:6; 53:7)
The Servant was innocent (Isa 53:9)
The Servant was subjected to constant suffering (Isa 50:6; 52:3, 8-10)
The Servant was reduced to near despair (Isa 49:4)
But the Servant's trust was in the Lord (Isa 49:4; 50:7-10)
The Servant was obedient (Isa 50:4-5)
The Servant persevered (Isa 50:7)
The Servant was victorious (Isa 42:4; 50:8-9)

III. APPLICATION

A. Isaiah's "Servant of God" is fulfilled in Jesus

1. Jesus healed the multitude to fulfill Isaiah

Mt 12:15-21 But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, 16 and warned them not to tell who He was. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: ... (Versus 18-21 is a quote from Isa 42:1-3)

2. After chapter 53 Isaiah never again used "servant" in the singular

rather he spoke of the blessings that the followers of the Servant will receive, calling them "the servants of the LORD" (54:17); "His servants" (56:6; 65:15; 66:14); and "My servants" (65:8-9, 13-14).

3. Jesus died for our sins as God's Servant

Isa 53:10-11 But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.

4. God's Servant has performed for us all our work

Isa 26:12 LORD, You will establish peace for us, since You have also performed for us all our works.

B. The place of works and obedience

1. Our work is to believe in Him (Jesus) whom He (Father) has sent

Jn 6:27-29 "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

2. Grace is given to the one who does not work but believes in Jesus

Ro 4:4-5 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

3. Israel's works disqualified them from God's righteousness

Ro 9:30-32 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.

4. God's righteousness isn't attained by works

Ro 10:3-4 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

5. Jesus is the source of eternal life to those who obey him

Heb 5:9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

6. We are to obey the commandments of faith and love

1 Jn 3:23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

C. God is doing a work in us

1. He is perfecting (bringing to completion) His work in us

Phil 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

2. God is working in us to do His will

Phil 2:12-13 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

3. God's word does its work in us

1 Th 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

The following References were used in this study:

Every name of God in the Bible
Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible
Eerdmans Bible Dictionary
Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary
Dictionary of Bible Themes
Word Pictures in the New Testament
Harper Bible Dictionary
Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary
The Bible Knowledge Commentary
Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary

