

God's Just Servant

Bible Background • ISAIAH 42

Printed Text • ISAIAH 42:1–9 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 98

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXPLORE the concept of Messiah, SENSE the wonder of Jesus' role as servant to the nations, and IMITATE Jesus as a servant of God who executes justice.

In Focus

David Boyd worked for five years as a mail sorter for Harts Distribution Service, a private postal company. David was a hard worker and really enjoyed his job. When a senior management position opened in the mail department. David applied for the job and interviewed well. "David, I don't know how to say this, but ... you didn't get the job." David was stunned. He asked Mr. Carter who received the promotion. "Mrs. Betty Howser," said Mr. Carter. David couldn't understand. Betty had only been with the company six months. Everyone enjoyed working with David. He was a man of integrity. Betty was just the opposite. She was lazy, did just enough work to get by, and was usually late for work. Several months later, Mr. Carter approached David as he was having lunch. "May I sit down with you?" asked Mr. Carter. As the two men ate, Mr. Carter told David that Betty's promotion was political. "She has contacts in high places with the company." In fact, Mr. Carter threatened to report her to the board of directors. Four weeks later, David was promoted to senior management. Mr. Carter's tenacious attitude and his willingness to fight for justice on behalf of David paid off in a positive way.

This week, our Bible Study Guide focuses on the Servant who provides justice for all people. What has been your reaction to injustice and other negative forces in your life?

Keep in Mind

"Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations (Isaiah 42:1, NLT).

Words You Should Know

A. Uphold (v. 1) tamak (Heb.)—To sustain or support.

B. Righteousness (v. 6) tsedeq (Heb.)— Right, just, normal, standard, justice, equity.

Say It Correctly

Decalogue. DEH-kah-log.

Penteteuch. PEN-teh-took

Uzziah. you-ZIE-uh.

Jotham. JAH-thum..

KJV

1 Isaiah 42:1

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

8 I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

NLT

1 Isaiah 42:1

“Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations.

2 He will not shout or raise his voice in public.

3 He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to all who have been wronged.

4 He will not falter or lose heart until justice prevails throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction.”

5 God, the LORD, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath to everyone, life to everyone who walks the earth. And it is he who says,

6 “I, the LORD, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will take you by the hand and guard you, and I will give you to my people, Israel, as a symbol of my covenant with them. And you will be a light to guide the nations.

7 You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons.

8 I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols.

9 Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I will prophesy again. I will tell you the future before it happens.”

The People, Places, and Times

Isaiah.

Bearing the name “Yahweh is salvation,” Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets of his time. He had a vision of God and was called by God to do God’s work bringing His nation to repentance in order to save it from a whirlpool of destruction. Isaiah came to the people with messages of judgment tempered with hope. He ministered for sixty years or more and prophesied during the reign of five kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. He pleaded with the people to turn from their wicked ways back to a loving God who would forgive and restore them. Isaiah saw the deliverance of Jerusalem from her enemies, the Assyrians. Through his prayers and by the intervention of God, Jerusalem was spared from Assyrian destruction. Many of the promises God gave through Isaiah have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Background

Isaiah 41 opens with the nations being challenged by God, who reminds them of His greatness, power, wisdom, and foreknowledge (Isaiah 41:1). More than 150 years before Cyrus was born, the Lord revealed to Isaiah that He was going to raise him up to be used by God to conquer the nations and protect Israel (vv. 2–6). Cyrus was king of Persia from 559–530 BC (see Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). God used him to free Israel from captivity under Babylonian rule during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Though the king was not a righteous man, Cyrus was God’s instrument to fulfill His divine purpose and to be a blessing to His chosen people. God had made a promise to Israel that He would use them as His channel of redemption. Therefore, they were encouraged not to be fearful in the midst of their captivity. In fact, the written revelation of God by which salvation would be offered to all the earth would come through Israel (Isaiah 41:8). Because God loved His people, they had no reason to doubt Him since He promised to be with them and impart His grace in their lives. God assured Israel that they would be kept in times of crisis and that their enemies would eventually be destroyed. In other words, God would sustain His people and be their Advocate. As Isaiah concludes chapter 41, he affirms that the Messiah would bring good tidings to the people (v. 27). Though Cyrus would allow the people to return to the Promised Land, it is only Jesus Christ who can provide God’s people with the safety, protection, and justice they desperately need.

At-A-Glance

1. A Judge to the Nations (Isaiah 42:1–4)
2. A Light for the Nations (vv. 5–7)
3. A Hope for the Nations (vv. 8–9)

In Depth

1. A Judge to the Nations (Isaiah 42:1–4)

Just like Isaiah 49:1–9; 50:4–11; and 52:13—53:12, Isaiah 42 is a clear reference to the “Servant Songs.” These passages of Scripture identify the Servant whom God has chosen to be His instrument of righteousness for His people. Though many Jewish scholars traditionally identify the “Servant” as the nation of Israel, as Christians we see in the Suffering Servant a prophecy of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who is the true Israel, faithfully fulfilling all the Law that God gave Israel to make it holy. Writing on behalf of God, Isaiah declared that God would send His Servant whom He would uphold. Isaiah identifies God’s Servant as “elect, referring to the Chosen One who was appointed by God for a specific task and purpose. Thus the Servant is the One in whom the Father “delighteth” (v. 1). The prophet declares that the Servant will neither “cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street”; that is, He will not have to cry out to be heard and obeyed. The Servant would

be meek and humble, not breaking a bruised reed or putting out smoking flax. The Servant would completely embody gentleness and yet righteous judgment. Isaiah reminds us that the Messiah will neither fail in His ministry, nor will He get discouraged because there is work yet to be done. God's righteous judgment has not fully been implemented in the earth. Until the Second Coming, the kingdom of God is ever expanding as God's people are in the world ministering to others and bringing them into a right relationship with the Father.

2. A Light for the Nations (vv. 5–7)

Isaiah writes that this is God, the One who made the heavens and earth and all aspects of creation. Isaiah takes his declaration from Genesis 1, where Scripture affirms that God not only put His seal of approval upon all creation, but also His spirit into human beings so that they might be in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:27; 2:1–4). This is the God who has raised up His Servant in righteousness. The word “righteousness” encompasses integrity, moral honesty, purity, and having a right heart before God. The Messiah was given the assignment to come to His creation to speak righteousness into the lives of people. God would “hold his hand and keep him” (v. 6). Thus, the Messiah was the fulfillment of God's “covenant” for the Jews and the “light” for the Gentiles who trust in Him. The word “covenant” has to do with a treaty or an alliance of friendship that is accompanied by signs and solemn oaths and is sealed by a relationship between two parties. Despite their rebellion, God is Israel's friend. He loves His people and has sent His Servant to bring them back to Him. At the same time, God loves the Gentiles, those who are not Jacob's descendants. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of these prophecies for Christians. Jesus Christ came so that He might destroy the work of the enemy (1 John 3:8) and bring light to the Gentiles (Acts 26:23). He has come to bring illumination and revelation to those who will receive Him.

3. A Hope for the Nations (vv. 8–9)

Isaiah gives the nations a glimpse of the Servant's identity: “I am the Lord” (v. 8). God will not give this “name” or His glory to any other, because none is worthy but Him. When Jesus claims himself to be the fulfillment of the prophecies (Luke 4:16–21) and the early New Testament writers use this language when describing Jesus (Mark 1:11), it is clear confirmation that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah and Lord. Philippians says that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11). The word “glory” indicates the majesty and splendor of Almighty God. He alone is worthy to be praised. One interpretation of verse 9 is that everything we see will come to an end. Those institutions and systems that have created such havoc and confusion in our lives will be gone. Paul says that the things we see are only temporary. What we cannot see are the eternal and “weighty” things of God's infinite glory (2 Corinthians 4:17–18). The “new things” are what Jesus Christ has declared unto His people. One day we shall see new heavens and a new earth where Jesus, God's Servant, shall be known as Lord of all (Revelation 21:1–2). We can trust God's word to us about the future where God reigns physically as He reigns in our hearts today. He was faithful to His word in the past to deliver Israel, we see Him delivering us today from sin and its effects, and we can trust His word that His kingdom come and His will be done in our future. Justice and righteous judgment shall be for every person, and we will experience God's peace and love because He has promised to make all things new.

Search the Scriptures

1. Is it possible for Jesus' ministry to be fulfilled before He returns to the earth for His people? Why or why not?
2. If God is just, why is there so much injustice in our nation and communities? Discuss.

Discuss the Meaning

In the Bible we see the detrimental effects of leaders who strayed away from the Lord. Throughout 1 and 2 Kings, Israel and Judah's kings are characterized by whether they followed in their forefathers' footsteps in obedience or disobedience. Here we see that even after exile, Israel still struggles to be who God called them to be. We see who they are, but what do we learn about God's character in these examples?

Liberating Lesson

The good news of Jesus Christ is liberating for all aspects of life. This is the news that our neighborhoods and country need. The division, anger, and incivility we see in our streets and on the news are so prevalent that they seem to be the way we expect and accept the world to behave. While some might think that younger generations or people from particular socioeconomic groups accept today's violence as the norm, that is not true. God's truth has a place in every generation. When your words and deeds share the truth of Jesus the Servant who brings the Good News to all cultures and communities, you can see how that message can make the difference we all need.

Make It Happen

Think about the new heavens and earth that God has promised us. Spend time rejoicing in the fact that one day injustice and oppressive systems will be gone and that God's righteous judgment will be the standard for all. Read the Daily Bible Readings for added encouragement. Then, be prepared to share the lesson with at least one person this week.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Isaiah 42:1–9

The concluding verses of chapter 41 speak of the futility of idols and their messengers, whose works amount to nothing. There, especially in verse 27, God says that He is the One to declare the good news to Zion and Jerusalem regarding the bearer of the good news, not the idols. This good news bearer is now introduced to us in chapter 42.

1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

Isaiah begins this section of prophecy with “Behold,” which calls attention to a great message about to unfold. The word “behold” can also be rendered as “here is,” in which case the opening phrase would read, “Here is my servant.” The speaker introduces His Servant to His audience, which includes the nation of Israel and all who hear the message. They are to turn their attention away from the idols and their messenger and turn instead to the Servant who brings the good news of salvation to His people. The Hebrew word for “servant” (Heb. ebed, EH-bed) means “one who works” (in any sense), and by implication “one who serves.” There are different suggestions about whom “servant” refers to, but the most logical and reasonable answer (generally accepted by the majority of scholars) is that it refers to the awaited Messiah. This Servant is unique and differs from an ordinary servant as humans understand it. His uniqueness is demonstrated in the series of qualifying or identifying attributes and the special relationship He has with the Lord God—He belongs to God. The first of

these designations, “whom I uphold” (Heb. tamak, taw-MAK) here means “to sustain” or “to support.” But God “upholds” His Servant and causes Him to be sustained. The idea is that God will sustain and support Him throughout His ministry. The second designation, which is also one of honor, is that He is God’s “elect” or “Chosen One.” Translated from the Hebrew word bakhir (baw-KHEER), this designation carries the idea of being chosen with ultimate and eternal significance. Christ had been chosen before time—in eternity—for the special task of redemption. The word “elect” is used to express the subject’s exclusive relationship to God. The Chosen One is also the One in whom God delights. The phrase “my soul delighteth” speaks of being “deeply pleased” or “passionately delighted with.” This delight involves the whole being; it is not a onetime event as the verb might suggest; rather, God continues to have pleasure in His Servant. Speaking of Christ on two occasions in the New Testament, the Lord says, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).

The Servant, the speaker says, has been endued with God’s Spirit. The phrase “my spirit” definitely refers to the Holy Spirit, who equips and works through people to accomplish their given tasks. The Lord Himself testifies of being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit for His work of deliverance, healing, and preaching the good news (Isaiah 11:1–2; 61:1–2). This prophecy is fulfilled in the New Testament during the Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:16–17; Luke 3:16; John 3:34; cf. Acts 10:38). John the Baptist testified concerning Christ: “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him” (John 1:32). Here the Lord says, “I have put My Spirit upon Him.” The tense here signifies a completed action, which shows that even before it is manifested—indeed, even before the prophecy is revealed to the prophet—the Lord had already equipped the Servant for His task with the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This also points to the eternal pre-existence of Christ, meaning Christ always existed even before He became incarnate. Here we get a glimpse of the concept of the Trinity.

The Servant is equipped from eternity for a specifically assigned mission—to “bring judgment to the Gentiles.” The word translated as “judgment” is the Hebrew noun mishpat (meesh-POT), which also can mean justice, ordinance, or verdict. The verb “to bring forth” comes from the Hebrew word yatsa’ (yot-SAW), which has a variety of meanings, including “to cause to go” or “to come out,” “to lead out,” and so on. The idea is more than that of announcing or proclaiming judgment, but of establishing justice or the law among the Gentiles, that is, foreign or heathen nations (non-Jewish people). The Jews referred to all non-Jews as Gentiles because they were aliens from the worship, rites, and privileges of Israel. The word “Gentiles” was used contemptuously by the Jews. Up until the time of this prophecy, only Israel possessed the type of “law” or “ordinance” spoken of here (Deuteronomy 4:5–8; Psalm 147:19–20). Although other nations had their own laws and decrees (Deuteronomy 4:7–8), theirs was not the true law and justice because it was founded on the worship of false gods and idols. True justice has its foundation in the knowledge of the true God. From verse 4, we assume that “judgment” or “justice” is synonymous with “law.” Therefore, the Servant’s mission is to establish the divine ordinance among the Gentiles, an idea that is repeated in verse 4 and is similar to the meaning of Isaiah 2:2–4 and 51:4–5. From these passages, we learn that the Servant is not an ordinary person, prophet, or teacher of the law who announces God’s ordinance or judgment to the people, but the Lawgiver Himself. Hence, He taught with authority (cf. Matthew 7:29).

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

Next, Isaiah’s prophecy identifies the manner in which the Servant will fulfill His mission: He will do it unassumingly, or unpretentiously (vv. 2–3). This fact is presented here (v. 2) with three negative verbs: He shall “not cry,” He shall “not lift up,” and He shall “not cause His voice to be heard in the street.” All this describes the quiet manner in which the Servant will carry out His task. These phrases are synonymous. The Servant’s demeanor will differ from that of an ordinary person such as the merchant who goes out advertising his wares with a loud voice on the street. As a teacher, He will speak with quietness and calmness. As a prophet, He will not proclaim His message with a loud voice or with sensationalism; neither will He present His message argumentatively (i.e., he will not “strive,” Matthew 12:19), nor will He push His teaching “down the throat” of the people. He does not need to, because the Holy Spirit is the One who will convince them. This prophecy is

fulfilled in Matthew 12:17–21 consequent to Jesus' charge to His disciples "that they should not make him known" (v. 16).

His modesty and the quiet manner in which He carries out His mission are also reflected in His attitude toward and treatment of the weak. This is graphically expressed in the imagery of the "reed" and the "smoking flax" or "lamp wick" (v. 3).

A "bruised" (Heb. ratsats, raw-TSATS) reed is cracked in many places or has breaks. God says to His servant that he should not "break" (Heb. shabar, shaw-BAR) this reed; that is, he should not burst it or break it down or break it off (or into pieces) any further. In keeping with the botanical theme, God says that the "smoking flax," which is feeble or obscure, is not to be "quenched" by His Servant. The "reed" (Heb. qaneh, kaw-NEH) is a gigantic hollowstemmed grass that grew along riverbanks and in moist areas of Egypt and Palestine. The word is used to refer to the marsh plants of the Bible. They form a large order of plants, such as flax, flags, bulrush, cane, and papyrus. The reeds were used as various objects, including walking sticks, fishing poles, musical instruments, and pens. People also used them for weaving baskets, mats, and other domestic objects. The "bruised reed" is a picture of the reed at a tender age, bruised or bent due to strong wind (cf. Matthew 12:20). The "smoking flax" refers to a lamp wick that is burning with a feeble flame because the oil has burned out. The flame can be blown out easily. Both the flickering, weak light and the bruised reed are symbols of frailty and weakness. The Servant will neither quench the flickering, weak light nor break the already bruised reed, which is another way of saying that He will sustain and uphold the weak (cf. 50:4). His activities will be marked with gentleness, compassion, and mercy (Matthew 11:28). This passage is applied to Jesus' healing ministry (Matthew 12:13, 20).

The last clause, "he shall bring forth judgment," echoes verse 1. The phrase "unto truth" simply shows the manner in which He will establish judgment—in faithfulness or in a dutiful and effectual manner.

4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

The first part of this verse is a play on words using the Hebrew metaphors from the previous verse: He will not "fail" (Heb. kahah, kaw-HAW) also meaning "to grow dim," recalling the dim, failing smoking flax from the previous verse. Nor will He "be discouraged" (Heb. ratsats, rat-SOTS), also meaning "to be crushed, or bruised," recalling the bruised reed from the previous verse. Affirming the Servant will not fail or be discouraged implies that the ministry of the Servant will not be easy; He will encounter difficulties and resistance. This is expressively prophesied of Him that He was "wounded" and "bruised" (Isaiah 49:50, 53) However, He will never grow weary or faint, nor will He be discouraged, but He will continue conscientiously until He accomplishes His task—until He establishes mishpat in the earth.

The setting of "judgment" is His act of salvation, and it is not restricted to the Jewish people only but is universal and includes both Jews and Gentiles (v. 1). The last part of this verse says that "the isles will wait for His law." "The isles" (Heb. 'i, EE) brings to mind far-off places and emphasizes how far God's law will spread. The "law" (Heb. torah, TOWrah) is synonymous with justice or judgment. Torah generally refers to teaching, precepts, and statutes, especially the Decalogue or the Pentateuch. Note the possessive pronoun "His" used here, which implies that it is not merely a reference to the Law of Moses but also to the divine precepts and instructions for living that the Servant of the Lord as the Lawgiver (v. 1) will bring to the people of the earth. Therefore, all humankind will eagerly wait for His law until He comes to take over the kingdoms of this world (Zechariah 14; Acts 15:13–18; Revelation 11:15).

5 Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

Verse 5 is transitional in nature. The prophet again introduces the one who sends His Servant and with the introduction directs our attention to God, who is about to speak directly to the Servant to confirm His calling. The prophet appeals to the person of God as the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is the one who created and stretched out the heavens, who spread forth the earth and everything in it. Since God is the Creator of everything, He has power and authority over everything. The One speaking is the one that gives “breath” (Heb. neshamah, nesh-aw-MAW) and “spirit” (Heb. ruach, ROO-akh) to all people on earth. These synonyms indicate that God breathed life into all of His creation. These qualifications authenticate the authority of the Servant of the Lord, who is to come to establish the law of God for all nations of the world. The Servant who comes in the name and power of the Creator has the authority of the Creator too.

6 I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

Now the Lord identifies Himself as the Speaker, confirming His call to the Servant. The first word in this verse is the singular personal pronoun “I”; it is actually rare to find a pronoun standing alone as the subject of a Hebrew sentence. It is used here for emphasis to establish the authority of the calling and to assure the Servant of the identity of the One who is behind the calling. He is the Lord, the covenant-keeping God of Israel, the One who is faithful to keep His promises and never fails. With such a God behind Him, the Servant cannot “fail” or “be discouraged” (v. 4) even in the face of obstacles or resistance.

The call is made “in righteousness.” This mission will have its foundation in God’s righteousness. The word “righteousness” (Heb. tsedek, TSEH-dek), which, among other things, means what is right, just, normal, or standard. It can also be translated as “justice” or “equity.” Righteousness is one of the attributes of God, and in Him is absolute justice. Therefore, in this attribute has the Servant been called, and in it will He accomplish the mandate of His calling. This will manifest itself in the salvation of those who yield to Him and punishment for those who reject Him. Jeremiah prophesied concerning Him, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. ... and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:5–6; 33:16).

Not only has God called Him in righteousness, but He will also hold the Servant’s hand and keep Him. The phrase “will hold thine hand” is similar in meaning to “whom I uphold” (v. 1), which means that the Lord will sustain; it again calls attention to the fact that the task of the Servant is not going to be an easy one. Hence, the Lord reaffirms His commitment with the phrase “and will keep thee.” God will more than hold His Servant’s hand; He will not let go of it. This signifies that the Lord will guide and protect the Messiah as a man guides and protects his child when he holds him by the hand.

The clause “and give thee for a covenant of the people” states the purpose of the Servant’s mission. Pay special attention to the preposition “of,” which indicates that it is a covenant belonging to the people. This reference to the “people” is not restricted to Jews alone but extends to all people, even to the Gentiles, as stated in the phrase which follows: “for a light of the Gentiles.” The Messiah is identified as “covenant” and “light,” in which case it is through Him that salvation will be mediated to the earth to both Jews and Gentiles. Being a “covenant” and a “light” implies more than being the source through which salvation comes to the people. The Servant is the embodiment of the covenant and light, the origin and dispenser of the covenant and the radiance of light Himself. John identified Christ as the Light that is coming into the world (John 1:7–8).

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

This verse begins with the imperative “to open” (Heb. paqakh, paw-KAKH). The purpose of the Servant’s mission, which is idiomatically expressed in the previous verse, is now made more explicit, although in different figurative terms. “To open the eyes of the blind” does not only mean healing of those who are physically blind (although Jesus did that during His ministry) but also refers to those blinded because of sin—

those who reject the love relationship the Lord has offered to them. All sinners are blind because of sin. This includes both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, the task of the Messiah, called the Light, is to open their eyes and deliver them from the darkness of sin. The same idea applies to the next two phrases. God literally sets captives free (Matthew 27:26; Acts 16:40). In addition to this, though, those without the knowledge of God are in bondage to sin and darkness, and they need to be liberated. They cannot liberate themselves; therefore, they need a Deliverer—not as a warrior, but as One who comes as God’s righteousness to impart God’s love and righteousness to them.

8 I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Again, the Lord identifies Himself as Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God of Israel, the eternal and self-existing God. The phrase “I am the Lord” does not merely identify who He is; it reassures the Servant of the power and authority behind that name and emphasizes His faithfulness. It is the same name used when He revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3 (cf. Exodus 6:3), a name that reflects His nature: the unchanging and sovereign God who forever stands by His word. The phrase “that is my name” adds further emphasis to the assurance He has given to the Servant.

This assurance of God’s faithfulness in keeping His promises is further stated in the last two phrases of this verse, which are synonymous: “my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” This is to say that “what I promise, I will perform.” He will not let the Servant down. What an assurance! Letting Him down or failing Him is tantamount to letting Satan take the essence of His being or His “glory” and letting the praise that belongs to God be taken by idols (“images”). Worship and praise belong only to God and therefore must not be given to any creature—neither human beings nor man-made graven images nor Satan, the enemy of all righteousness. The following statements (v. 9) further strengthen the certainty that all that the Lord has promised will definitely be fulfilled.

9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

The speaker of this utterance, whether God through the prophet or the prophet himself, is difficult to identify. Nonetheless, the speaker talks about the former things that have been fulfilled, which indicates that the new things or the present predictions he is making will also surely come to pass. “The former things” most likely refers to the entire past history of Israel, particularly the redemption of Israel through the exodus from Egypt, which is referred to in the next chapter (43:12–19).

Here the prophet, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recalls the faithfulness of God in keeping His word and promises in the past, reassures the people of the certain fulfillment of the present prediction, and reminds them that God is to be fully trusted. The certainty and assurance of these prophecies are further strengthened with the following phrase: “before they spring forth I tell you of them.” These new predictions and promises will “spring forth” (i.e., will be fulfilled) like a seed in the ground. At first unseen, they will eventually germinate, and Israel will remember them and honor the Lord. Confident in the faithfulness of the Lord to keep His promises even before they “spring forth,” Isaiah calls on the people, both Jews, and Gentiles and all who would hear this prophecy—indeed the whole earth—to start celebrating by singing “a new song to the Lord” (vv. 10–12).

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Faith Heroes Acted Justly
(Hebrews 11:29–35)

TUESDAY

Your King Comes Humbly
(Matthew 21:1–11)

WEDNESDAY

House of Prayer for All Nations
(Mark 11:15–19)

THURSDAY

Neglect Justice at Your Peril
(Luke 11:42–44)

FRIDAY

Jesus, God's Servant Messiah
(Matthew 12:15–21)

SATURDAY

God Will Not Forsake the People
(Isaiah 42:10–17)

SUNDAY

God's Servant to Establish Justice Everywhere
(Isaiah 42:1–9)