

Bible Study 2

Jesus' Use of the Jewish Scriptures in the Gospels

Theme: Jesus' use of the Jewish Scriptures in the Gospels

Text: Matthew 12:15–21 and Isaiah 42:1–4

Main Questions

- What is Jewish Scriptures within its context?
- What is imagination in the Hebrew text?
- How does Jesus interpret text in relation to his mission and message?
- How can Christians hear and imagine Jesus' call to holy living?

Opening Scripture Reading: Matthew 12:15–21 CEB

When Jesus became aware of this, he departed. Many followed him, and he cured all of them, and he ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

"Here is my servant, whom I have chosen,
my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the gentiles.
He will not wrangle or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.
He will not break a bruised reed
or quench a smoldering wick
until he brings justice to victory.
And in his name the gentiles will hope."

Supporting Scripture Reading: Isaiah 42:1–4 CEB

But here is my servant, the one I uphold; my chosen, who brings me delight. I've put my spirit upon him; he will bring justice to the nations. He won't cry out or shout aloud or make his voice heard in public. He won't break a bruised reed; he won't extinguish a faint wick, but he will surely bring justice. He won't be extinguished or broken until he has established justice in the land. The coastlands await his teaching.

Memory Verse

Matthew 12:20 CEB: “He won’t break a bent stalk, and he won’t snuff out a smoldering wick, until he makes justice win.”

Background: The Servant in Isaiah

Matthew 12:15–21 quotes from Isaiah 42:1–4, the first of the so-called “Servant Songs” in what is often called Second Isaiah. Other servant passages include Isaiah 49:1–6, Isaiah 50:4–9, and Isaiah 52:13–53:12. The Servant is one chosen by God to bring justice to the nations. The identity of this servant has been the subject of debates without coming to a resolution. The servant in other section suggest that the servant is Israel, also called Jacob. The people is called God’s chosen. [41:8-9; 44:1-2,21; 45:4; 48:20]. Further, the servant is other than Israel/Jacob and in the related chapters 56-66, God’s servant is identified as Moses (63:11).

The Servant may be Israel who is called by God to bring to the nations the covenant ideals and teachings that were originally revealed to the Israelites through Moses and insisted on the by the prophets.

Why is this so? Why should a nation without land influence nations more powerful than themselves?

It may be to:

1. allow scattered tribes of Israel to be influencers within their geographical area. God is not restricted to the Jerusalem Temple.
2. encourage a mental and spiritual reset from a theology of victimhood to a theology of servanthood to establish a prophetic nation without boundaries.
3. legitimize integration Jewish religious, cultural, and historical values within gentiles’ cultures.
4. New posture of conciliation with enemies and history toward a new future without losing covenant connections

Isaiah 42:2-3.

The mission of the Servant is not accomplished simply through preaching (2) or aggression (3). The mission is executed or implemented by activities or examples of doing justice. [Read Isaiah 49:6].

Isaiah 42:4.

The Servant’s mission will endure hardships to “establish justice.” So, the Servant’s focus is to look forward to new direction of being participants of social spaces where Justice is not about revenge or mourning the past.

Instead, the Servant/community focus is focused as becoming participants within new reality.

What is the major role of the Servant on God's mission? How can we establish justice within the church community?

Matthew's Gospel: Jesus as the Servant

Christian tradition interpret the "the servant" in the "Servant Songs" as "Jesus." Jesus endured suffering throughout his short ministry and at his death on a cross. Parts of Isaiah 42:1 are quoted in the New Testament for example, at the baptism of Jesus and during the transfiguration. [Read Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17].

Matthew 12:18-21 paraphrases all of Isaiah 42:1-4. The aspect of silence in the Isaiah text connects with Jesus asking for silence from telling the officials and wider society about the healing done by Jesus as he did not want to be known. Jesus was in a running conflict with the Pharisees and other community leaders.

Later Patristic interpreters saw an illusion to the Trinity in the language of Isaiah 42:1. God (as the Father), speaks to the Servant (Jesus as the Son), on whom God's Spirit (understood as the Holy Spirit).

Also, Evangelical Christianity justifies missionary activities though the language of Isaiah 42:1 as Justice to the nations.

How is Jesus being interpreted in the Isaiah text quoted in Matthew?

Matthew 12:15-21 employ a literary devise signaling the fulfillment of Scripture referring to the mission of Jesus in his community. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is having conflicts in rural Judah with the Pharisees. Jesus earlier in the chapter 12 is continuing healing in community as acts of mercy. Jesus was being violently exposed by the community leaders for his healing particularly on the Sabbath. Jesus is continuous healing (Acts of Mercy), after opposition forces Jesus to relocate.

While the quotation points to Israel in Babylonian exile- to be a light to the nations and community struggle in the pain of change. The quotation points to Israel in Babylon exile, to be light to the nations; and not show hostility. Jesus also, like the early disciples, had to navigate Roman Imperial power and ways of domination. God's servant Israel exhibits mercy and life-giving justice. Jesus shows out God's blessings.

1. How is Jesus acting as the “Servant” called by God in the text?
2. What is the connection with healing and doing Justice?
3. Why is the fulfillment of scripture important in Matthew?

Sentence Answers to the Final Three Questions

1. Jesus acts as God’s Servant through mercy, healing, humility, and nonviolence.
2. Healing is justice because it restores people to wholeness and dignity.
3. Fulfillment matters in Matthew because Jesus completes Israel’s story and mission.

Next Step

This week, practice servant-shaped justice by choosing one act of mercy—such as encouraging someone who is discouraged, helping someone in need, or making peace in a difficult relationship—and reflect on how it reveals the way of Jesus.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for showing us how the suffering servant continues to work through those who trust you today. Jesus lived, suffered, and died for the redemption of creation. Grant us courage to be faithful and truthful in sharing your great love that changes lives, even in the realities of resistance we may experience. Lead us as your servants in humble service this day. Amen.