

Session 1 The Forerunner Message in Isaiah 49

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Isaiah 49 focuses on Jesus' global mandate, elaborating on His call in 42:1-9 to establish justice. Isaiah reported on a conversation between the Father and Son (49:1-12). Jesus spoke of being commissioned to save the nations; He highlighted a few things God told Him directly (49:3, 5, 8).
- B. The Servant of God in this passage is Jesus, the "ideal Israel," who established a covenant in (49:8) by His blood, bringing salvation to Israel and the nations (49:6), and restores the earth (49:8).
- C. Outline for Isaiah 49
- 49:1-7 Jesus is commissioned to save Israel and the Gentile nations
 - 49:1-4 Jesus is called and prepared (His first coming)
 - 49:5-7 Jesus will be worshiped by world leaders (His second coming)
 - 49:8-12 Jesus will restore the earth and liberate prisoners
 - 49:13 The nations will praise God for His salvation
 - 49:14-21 The restoration of Zion will prove that God did not forget her
 - 49:22-26 Jesus' oath to cause Gentiles to bring people to Israel
- D. **Premise:** What occurred in history will be surpassed in the Great Tribulation in terms of the intensity of man's sin and God's judgment on Israel and the nations (Dan. 8:23: 12:1, 7; Mt. 24:21).
²¹For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred...nor ever will. (Mt. 24:21)

II. JESUS IS COMMISSIONED TO SAVE ISRAEL AND THE GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 49:1-7)

- A. Jesus is called and prepared related to His first coming (49:1-4). He will be worshiped by world leaders related to His second coming (49:5-7).
- B. Jesus called the nations to listen to Him as He shared part of His story and conversation with the Father (49:1-4). This conversation gives insight into Jesus' perseverance at His first coming.
- ¹"Listen, O coastlands, to Me [Jesus], and take heed, you peoples [nations] from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb...and He has made mention of My name. (Isa. 49:1-2)***
1. The Father sent Gabriel to Mary at the time she conceived Jesus. Gabriel mentioned Jesus' name and His calling as the Son of the Highest sitting on the throne of David (Lk. 1:31-33).
***³¹"...you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.
³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David...³³and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Lk. 1:31-33)***
 2. "From the womb" speaks of His humanity. This Servant is a man, not the nation Israel. Jesus was not seeking to make His name great, but was called by God from the womb.

C. Jesus' life and ministry is compared to a sharp sword and polished arrow (49:2-3).

²*And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft [arrow]; in His quiver He has hidden Me.”³“And He said to Me, ‘You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.’” (Isa. 49:2-3)*

1. **Hidden by God:** God hid Jesus in two ways—in *His hand* while making Him a polished arrow (before His ministry began) and *in His quiver* after His ministry began. For Jesus to be hidden meant that the fullness of His destiny was “veiled” to men until His second coming.
 - a. Jesus was born to be a king, yet He refused to accept kingship ahead of God’s timing (Jn. 6:15), He allowed crowds leave Him (Jn. 6:66) and embraced the cross and waiting patiently for 2,000+ years for the fullness of God’s promises to come to pass.
 - b. God’s plan includes “hiding” Jesus in different ways— initially for 30 years, then for 3½ years during His ministry, and then for 2,000+ years of church history.

2. **He made My mouth like a sharp sword:** Jesus spoke words that went forth in power like a sword (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 2:16; 19:15). The anointed proclamation of God’s Word is Jesus’ weapon. He engages in war and defeats His enemies by speaking anointed words. The sword is an offensive weapon used in short-range warfare.

⁴*He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth...[to] slay the wicked. (Isa. 11:4)*

3. **He made Me a polished arrow:** Jesus’ ministry is compared to a sharp arrow that can strike the enemy with a lethal blow from a distance. Arrows are an offensive weapon that were used in long-range warfare to strike an enemy. An arrow was polished or made smooth by rubbing it until it was free from roughness and unevenness that hindered its accuracy in flight.

4. **Quiver:** A quiver protects arrows from the elements. It looks like a dark, empty shaft, unless we understand what it is in God’s wisdom. The quiver season can be the most difficult because God’s servant has already been polished by responding rightly to God for years and has grown accustomed to being used by the Lord. It tests our faith to be hidden in the quiver.

5. **My servant Israel:** The Servant in this passage is Jesus, the “ideal Israel,” who established a covenant (49:8) by His blood, who brings God’s salvation to Israel and the nations (49:6), is worshiped (49:7), and restores the earth (49:8). He is the “pattern” Son that we imitate.

- a. The name *Israel* was first given to Jacob after he wrestled with God (Gen. 32:24-32). *Israel* means “prince with God.” The destiny of Jacob and His children was to live in the blessing and responsibility of being a “prince with God.”
- b. Jesus embodies all that God called Israel to be. He functions as the “ideal Israel” who calls Israel to be like Him. In 49:3, there is solidarity between Jesus, “the ideal Servant,” and the nation of Israel who is also called God’s servant in Isaiah 43-48.
- c. Calling Jesus, “Israel,” referred to His function *as a light to the nations*. Israel will faithfully fulfill this function in the Millennium by reflecting the light of Jesus.

- D. Jesus' view of His ministry in this age (49:4-5): There were two perspectives of Jesus' ministry—in the *eyes of men* Jesus' ministry appeared to be in vain, but in the *eyes of God* it was glorious. All of God's servants must choose between these two perspectives. This passage does not describe Jesus complaining; it reveals His patient confidence in God's evaluation of His life as glorious.

“I said, ‘I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and in vain; yet surely My just reward is with the LORD, and My work with my God.’”⁵ And now the LORD says, who formed Me from the womb...to bring Jacob back to Him...I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD... (Isa. 49:4-5)

1. ***I have labored in vain:*** Men concluded that Jesus spent His strength in vain because He did not achieve anything notable in their eyes during His 33 years. However, God saw His life as glorious. In light of God's calling, preparation, and empowerment of Jesus, one might expect only successes, not failures or delays. In 49:5-6, we see a quotation of what God said to Jesus.
 2. ***Glorious in the eyes of the Lord:*** Jesus had confidence that God saw His life as glorious. He understood that the fullness of God's promises and rewards are delayed until the age to come.
 3. ***Well pleased:*** The Father affirmed Jesus' responses as a child and a young man (Mt. 3:17). Before He preached one message, the Father was pleased with His 30 years of humility.
¹⁷A voice from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mt. 3:17)
 4. ***My reward:*** Jesus had confidence in God's evaluation of His life and ministry.
- E. ***Kingdom mindset:*** The greatest tragedy is to die and stand before Jesus with little or no history of faithfulness that expressed our obedient love to God. It is far greater tragedy to suffer loss in the age to come than to suffer loss in this age. This is foundational to a kingdom mindset.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For...the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

- F. God's promise to use Jesus to bring salvation to the nations will be openly seen when He returns (49:5-6).
- ⁵“...the LORD says, who formed Me...to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel is gathered to Him...⁶indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should...raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’” (Isa. 49:5-6)***
1. ***To bring Jacob back to Him:*** This is a promise of Israel's national salvation (Rom. 11:26).
 2. ***It is too small a thing:*** The Father declared that restoring Israel to God is not a large enough mandate for Jesus' leadership. He was mandated to save the entire world! It is “too light a thing” to only use Jesus to bring salvation to Israel in light of the incarnation and cross.
 3. ***Light to the Gentile:*** The Father gave Jesus as a light to the Gentiles. Isaiah spoke of the Messiah as bringing a great light to the nations (9:2; 11:10; 34:1; 42:6; 55:5, 60:1-3, etc.).

- G. The Father spoke to Jesus about both rejection and glorification to follow (49:7). The Father foretold of Jesus being despised by the very people that He was sent to save. He was not offended at Israel's rejection, but continued to serve them. Israel will experience the same two realities.

⁷Thus says the LORD [the Father], the Redeemer of Israel...to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors, to the Servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD [the Father] who is faithful..." (Isa. 49:7)

1. ***Despised and abhorred:*** The Father wanted Jesus to be prepared to be despised by His people. Jesus gave a similar warning to prepare the end-time Church (Mt. 24:9-14).

³He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We hid...our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (Isa. 53:3)

2. Jesus understands and identifies with the rejection and hatred by Gentile nations that Israel experienced throughout history and will experience even more in the end times (49:19-25).

3. ***Kings shall worship Jesus:*** The kings of the nations shall worship Jesus in the Millennium (Ps. 72:11; 102:15; 138:4; 148:11; Isa. 60:10-11; 62:2; Rev. 12:5; 15:4; 21:24).

¹¹Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. (Ps. 72:11)

4. ***Servant of rulers:*** Jesus will reign over all nations as the "servant" of their kings (Rev. 1:5). The servant motif includes leading with a servant spirit the very people who persecuted you. In the Millennium, Israel will imitate Jesus as servant-rulers over the nations.

⁵Jesus Christ...the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, (Rev. 1:5)

5. King of glory is also the Servant of rulers. In the Daniel 7:13-14 prophecy of the Son of Man's world leadership, Jesus connected world government to serving people with humility (Mt. 20:28). In the Millennium, Jesus will reign over all other kings as the Servant of rulers.

²⁸The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve... (Mt. 20:28)

6. The nations will see Jesus' humility in His victorious triumph at His coming (Ps. 45:4). He will fill the earth with humility. He will govern through people who choose humility.

- H. The Father promised to help Jesus in His divine commission (49:8-12). He was commissioned to restore the earth and its desolate inheritances (49:8) and to liberate and lead the captives (49:9-12).

⁸Thus says the LORD: "...in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will...give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages; ⁹that You may say to the prisoners, 'Go forth,' to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' They shall feed along the roads...¹⁰They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them; for He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water...¹¹I will make each of My mountains a road, and My highways shall be elevated. ¹²Surely these shall come from afar; Look! Those from the north and the west, and these from the land of Sinim [China or Egypt]." (Isa. 49:8-12)

1. **Day of salvation:** God helped (anointed and protected) Jesus during His first coming. The day of salvation began with His ministry (Lk 4:19) and comes to fullness in the Millennium.
 2. **Give You as a covenant:** Jesus is the means and the embodiment of God’s covenant with His people. He established the new covenant with His blood (Jer. 31:31; Lk. 22:20; 2 Cor. 3:6). His commission is set in covenant terms, including restoring the earth and rescuing prisoners.
 3. **The people:** The “people” may speak of Israel or the Gentiles (11:10; 49:1, 22). Here, it may highlight the Jewish people because “they” (49:9-10) and “these” (49:12) refer to Israel.
 4. **To restore the earth:** The Father commissioned Jesus to restore the earth and cause Israel to inherit the desolate heritages (Isa. 49:8)—this occurs after the outpouring of the seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 16). Many cities will be desolate, needing to be rebuilt when Jesus returns.
 5. **Prisoners:** As the Good Shepherd, Jesus will liberate prisoners from the darkness (49:9) and lead them on smooth highways to Israel (49:9-11; 35:8). This will be an expression of His covenant love. Freeing prisoners in darkness was prophesied in 42:7
 6. **Lead them:** Jesus will lead them with mercy as He provides food and water for their journey to the land of Israel, similar to Israel’s journey through the wilderness with Moses (49:9-12).
 7. **Shall feed along the roads:** Jesus will feed them on their journey (40:11; 41:18; 43:19; 49:10).
 8. **Neither hunger nor thirst:** Jesus will guide them to water and protect them from the sun.
 9. **My highways:** Jesus will make *each* of His mountains a road, and His highways shall be elevated (49:11). He will level the mountains and remove obstacles to bring the Jewish people home to the land of Israel. Even the weakest will be able to walk on these roads.
 10. **Worldwide return:** Jewish people will come from the ends of the earth (43:6; 49:12, 22).
 11. **Land of Sinim:** Sinim is often identified as China or as “Aswan” in southern Egypt. Many identify Sinim with China, i.e. the inhabitants of the land of Sin. Many associate the origin of the Chinese civilization with the capital of Shensi, namely, Siang-fu (translated *Father Sin*). Also Sinim resembles *Sinae*, the Latinization of *Qin*, after the Qin state founded in 778 BC.
- I. The nations will praise God for His salvation (49:13). As Jesus rescues and restores His afflicted people, all of creation is to rejoice. John saw heaven rejoicing (Rev. 18:20; 19:1-6).
- ¹³***Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted. (Isa. 49:13)***

III. THE RESTORATION OF ZION WILL PROVE THAT GOD DID NOT FORGET HER (49:14-21)

- A. In the Great Tribulation, Isaiah describes Jewish people expressing their fear that God had forsaken and forgotten them (49:14-18). The Lord assures them that He has not forgotten them.
- ¹⁴“But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.’ ¹⁵Can a woman forget her nursing child...? They may forget, yet I will not forget you [in the Great Tribulation]. ¹⁶See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands...¹⁷Your sons shall make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste shall go away from you. ¹⁸Lift up your eyes, look around and see; all these...come to you. As I live,” says the LORD, “You shall surely clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament, and bind them on you as a bride does.” (Isa. 49:14-18)*
- B. Jesus will *restore* and *supernaturally bless* Israel’s population, land, cities, and honor (49:14-26). This passage describes Israel’s affliction related to *destroyers* who *laid them waste* (49:17) and *swallowed them up*, to their *desolate places*, the *land of their destruction* (49:19), to the *children they lost* (49:20-21), and in being *captives* and *those who wandered to and fro* (49:21).
- C. Isaiah described the oppression of the Jewish people and desolate condition of the land of Israel in context to the Great Tribulation, along with the massive population growth afterwards (49:14-21).
- ¹⁹“For your waste and desolate places, and the land of your destruction, will even now be too small for the inhabitants; and those who swallowed you up will be far away. ²⁰The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, ‘The place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell.’ ²¹Then you will say in your heart, ‘Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? There I was, left alone; but these, where were they?’” (Isa. 49:19-21)*
- D. *Too small*: The numbers of their children coming to Israel will be so great that many will see the land as too small for all of their inhabitants to find a place to live.
- E. *Who brought these children up?*: Zion will be amazed at the sudden reversal of favor and increase.

IV. JESUS’ OATH TO CAUSE THE GENTILES TO BRING PEOPLE TO ISRAEL (ISA. 49:22-26)

- A. Gentile kings and queens will tenderly bring Jewish children to the land of Israel (49:22-23).
- ²²...“Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples [Gentiles]; they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders; ²³kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers... Then you will know that I am the LORD...” (Isa. 49:22-23)*
- B. Jesus will destroy the evil oppressors of Israel who were mighty and seemingly invincible.
- ²⁴Shall the prey be taken from the mighty [the Antichrist’s empire], or the captives of the righteous be delivered? ²⁵But thus says the LORD: “Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you. I will save your children. ²⁶I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their blood...All flesh shall know that I...am your Savior” (Isa. 49:24-26)*