

## Week 9: Isaiah Chapters 49 to 53

### We see a Suffering Servant

- Chapters 49 to 53 hold within them what feel like the weightiest material of the entire collection of Isaiah's messages.
- The overarching theme of this section is that the LORD appoints a singular "servant" to represent Israel and accomplish what Israel was disqualified to accomplish, namely to rescue both itself and the Nations.
- 49:1-50:3 Shows the LORD's commissioning of the Servant to restore Israel in repentance and bring true justice to the Nations (remember the Redemptive Hope in the oracles to the nations section).
- 50:4-52:12 Is a call from the Servant in trust to the LORD that he will be vindicated on behalf of those who follow him. And an address to the followers of the Servant to be comforted and trust in him.
- 52:13-53:12 The Servant specifically suffers and dies, and yet is alive on behalf of those who follow him.
- The Judgement of Israel up to this point was the direct result of their own rebellion against the LORD. They had been punished for their own sin. But in these chapters the "Servant" is proven innocent of any wrongdoing yet takes the representative punishment of those to whom it was rightly due.
- The Gospel through an Old Testament lens.

### Chapter 49

<sup>1</sup>Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. **The LORD called me from the womb**, from the body of my mother he named my name. <sup>2</sup>He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. <sup>3</sup>**And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."** <sup>4</sup>But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God." <sup>5</sup>**And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—<sup>6</sup>he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; **I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."**** <sup>7</sup>Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one **deeply despised, abhorred by the nation**, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." <sup>8</sup>Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the

The one called here is now referred to as the "servant".

"Israel" in vs 3 shows that the servant is called to be the true representative of Israel. Vs 5 shows the task of redeeming the remnant of Israel, AND fulfilling Israel's role of being a "light for the nations" (Vs 6).

"the nation": the servant will be one rejected by the nation.

See 2 Corinthians 6:2  
Today is the day of salvation!

Vs 14 Has the Lord abandoned his covenant people?

land, to apportion the desolate heritages, <sup>9</sup>saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; <sup>10</sup>they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. <sup>11</sup>And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. <sup>12</sup>Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." <sup>13</sup>Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. <sup>14</sup>But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." <sup>15</sup>"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. <sup>16</sup>Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me. <sup>17</sup>Your builders make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste go out from you. <sup>18</sup>Lift up your eyes around and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, declares the LORD, you shall put them all on as an ornament; you shall bind them on as a bride does. <sup>19</sup>"Surely your waste and your desolate places and your devastated land— surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away. <sup>20</sup>The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: 'The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.' <sup>21</sup>Then you will say in your heart: 'Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?' " <sup>22</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. <sup>23</sup>Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame." <sup>24</sup>Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? <sup>25</sup>For thus says the LORD: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children. <sup>26</sup>I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

See Revelation 7:16 - The context for the quote is "After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number..." (Rev 7:9)

Vs8-13 the Servant reminds them of God's purpose for them from chapters 40-48 "Behold my purpose".

The Lord reaffirms his promise to restore Israel.

## Chapter 50

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD: "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away. <sup>2</sup>Why, when I came, was there no man; why, when I called, was there no one to answer? Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst. <sup>3</sup>I clothe the heavens with blackness and make sackcloth their covering." <sup>4</sup>The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. <sup>5</sup>The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. <sup>6</sup>I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. <sup>7</sup>But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. <sup>8</sup>He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. <sup>9</sup>Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. <sup>10</sup>Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. <sup>11</sup>Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.

Israel is reminded that their exile was the result of their sin.

The servant is one who was taught, and had "ears to hear". Consider the question, "How did Jesus learn?", and read Luke 2:41-51 in light of Isaiah 50:4-5.

The servant is abused, yet is found to be blameless.

Vs 10 is a key question to the reader.

Vs 11 is the outcome of answering "Not me" to vs 10.

## Chapter 51

<sup>1</sup>"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. <sup>2</sup>Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him. <sup>3</sup>For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. <sup>4</sup>"Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. <sup>5</sup>My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. <sup>6</sup>Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth

Three addresses to those who follow the Servant.

beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed. <sup>7</sup>“Listen to me, **you who know righteousness**, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. <sup>8</sup>For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool, but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.”

<sup>9</sup>Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? <sup>10</sup>Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? <sup>11</sup>And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. <sup>12</sup>“I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, <sup>13</sup>and have forgotten the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor?

<sup>14</sup>He who is bowed down shall speedily be released; he shall not die and go down to the pit, neither shall his bread be lacking. <sup>15</sup>I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the LORD of hosts is his name. <sup>16</sup>And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, ‘You are my people.’ ” <sup>17</sup>Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, **you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.** <sup>18</sup>There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne; there is none to take her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up. <sup>19</sup>These two things have happened to you— who will console you?— devastation and destruction, famine and sword; who will comfort you? <sup>20</sup>Your sons have fainted; they lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of the LORD, the rebuke of your God. <sup>21</sup>Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine:

<sup>22</sup>Thus says your Lord, the LORD, your God who pleads the cause of his people: “Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more;” <sup>23</sup>and I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you,

Four **announcements** of the Lord’s deliverance.

Vs 10 like a NEW Exodus

Israel has drunk from the cup of God’s righteous wrath.

Consider this in light of Luke 22:39-42.

‘Bow down, that we may pass over’; and you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to pass over.”

## Chapter 52

<sup>1</sup>Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. <sup>2</sup>Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. <sup>3</sup>For thus says the LORD: “You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.” <sup>4</sup>For thus says the Lord GOD: “My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing. <sup>5</sup>Now therefore what have I here,” declares the LORD, “seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail,” declares the LORD, “and continually all the day my name is despised. <sup>6</sup>Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am.” <sup>7</sup>How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” <sup>8</sup>The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. <sup>9</sup>Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. <sup>11</sup>Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. <sup>12</sup>For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard. <sup>13</sup>Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. <sup>14</sup>As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—<sup>15</sup>so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.

## Chapter 53

<sup>1</sup>Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup>For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

See Romans 2:24 In conjunction with those who identify with the Law but don't follow it.

See Romans 10:15

See 2 Corinthians 6:17 Paul admonishing believers not to be “yoked” together with unbelievers.

See Romans 15:21 Those who have not heard the Gospel will.

See Romans 10:16

See John 12:38 Consider vs 41 “Isaiah said these things because he saw his (Christ's) glory and spoke about him.”

Sprinkle = always used for casting oil or blood for consecration purposes.

Context: Faith comes through hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ.

<sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup>Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup>All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup>He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. <sup>8</sup>By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? <sup>9</sup>And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. <sup>10</sup>Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup>Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup>Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

This is the perception of those watching.

Vs 4 See Matthew 8:17 connected to the healing ministry of Jesus.

Vs 5,6,9 See 1 Peter 2:22-25 Pointing us to follow the Servant Jesus' example.

Vs 7-8 See Acts 8:32-33 Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Uniquely Isaiah switches from third person language to first person language, because the acts of the Suffering Servant were on his behalf as well as upon those who would hear his message.

And ALL that is done to the servant is done **BY THE WILL** of the LORD.

The bearing of the sins of others by the servant is accounted as righteousness for the "many".

See Luke 22:37 The servant dies...but makes intercession. Points to the resurrection of the servant.

#### BEFORE NEXT WEEK:

- Read Isaiah 54:1 – 55:13
- Suggested reading from *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners* – Chapters 36 thru 39
- Pray through Isaiah 53:4-6 in light of the reality that the "we" and "our" includes you.