

BEHOLD MY SERVANT (Part 1)

Isaiah 42:1–9

Key Verse: 42:1

Chapters 40–55 of Isaiah¹ contain poetic prophecies that concern the people of Judah in Babylonian Captivity. In this section, Isaiah frequently uses the word “servant,” and 12 times it is referring to the people of Israel.² But scattered throughout these chapters Isaiah also introduces four “Servant Songs” (42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–10; 52:13–53:12) that describe a very special servant. The first and last of these songs begin with God himself saying, “Behold, my servant...” (42:1; 52:13). Sometimes God speaks to his servant (42:5–9; 49:6–7); other times, the servant himself speaks (49:1–5; 50:4–9). As we read these songs, progressively more is revealed about this servant. And who is being described becomes unmistakable. Isaiah is speaking about the glory of the Messiah, Jesus (Jn12:41). This Jesus, God’s Servant, our Messiah, is still God’s only hope for all the nations. Through studying these servant songs we want to know more of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as we contemplate his glory, may God work in us to grow as servants more like him.

1. Read verse 1. What does it mean that God “upholds” and “delights” in his servant, and that he put his Spirit upon him (1; 11:1–5; Mt3:16–17)?
2. Note how “justice” is repeated (1,3,4; 1:17). Why is eliminating idolatry a part of it (8; 41:21–24,29)? Why is bringing his justice to the nations so important to God (5:16)?
3. How else is the servant described (2)? To what does the vivid imagery in verse 3a refer? (Mt12:15ff.) What more is said about him, and why is his faithfulness highlighted (3b–4a)? What does “the coastlands wait for his law” suggest (4b; see 2:3; 51:4–5)?
4. What does God tell his servant personally (5–6a)? What does it mean that God gives him “as a covenant for the people” (6b; 49:8; 54:10; Mt26:28)? What is God’s purpose for his servant, and what does this mean (7)?
5. Summarize what we learn when we “behold” God’s Servant, Jesus. How can we become servants who are more like him?

¹ Part 2 of the book (Part 1: chapters 1–39; Part 3: chapters 56–66)

² 41:8–10; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1–2,21; 45:4; 48:20; 54:17