

GOD'S GLORIOUS AND FAITHFUL SERVANT
Isaiah 49

Intro: With this chapter we begin the second of the three divisions in chapters 40-66. Do you remember what they are?
Chs. 40-48, 49-57, 58-66.

In this section there is a change in emphasis, but not a complete departure from the emphasis in chs. 40-48. In that first section the Lord was intent on showing that His love for His people had not changed, and that His purpose toward His people had not changed, and would not change, because He was God. There is none like He is. He might have to judge His people, but He would not abandon them.

This emphasis of comfort for Israel continues in this section, but with some deletions, and a stronger emphasis on a point that has been made before:

- 1) The deletion: Nothing more is said about Babylon and Cyrus.
- 2) The new emphasis: Now we begin to see more in detail the emphasis upon salvation in the spiritual sense, and also the purpose of God to include the Gentiles. The presentation of the Messiah as the Servant of the Lord which was introduced in chapter 42 now becomes the major theme, and we see that here in chapter 49.

But there is a problem. How are we to understand the fact that Israel is called God's servant in verse 3, and then another is called God's servant in verse 5 when speaking about Israel?

The answer is simple. Israel is the servant of the Lord, but the Messiah is also the servant of the Lord. Both were chosen from the womb, i.e., God never had any other purpose for them than that they should be used for the accomplishment of the Father's will on earth with regard to salvation, but it is clear that Israel as the Lord's servant would have failed completely if it were not for the Lord's greater and more glorious and more faithful servant, the Messiah, Whom we now know to be the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, Israel is in view in vv. 1-4 as the servant of the Lord, but after that we are to be concerned with the Messiah.

I. ISRAEL, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD (Isa. 49:1-4).

- A. Israel's address to the nations (vv. 1, 2).
- B. Israel's relationship to the Lord (v. 3). Remember we are speaking about the remnant, the elect, of the whole nation.
- C. Israel's despair (v. 4).

II. THE LORD'S GREATER SERVANT (Isa. 42:5-26).

A. This servant's relationship to the Lord (v. 5). ~~“Lord” must be used in this verse of two different Members of the Godhead--the first of Christ, the second of the Father.~~

B. The work of this Servant (vv. 6-12).

Not only will Israel be preserved, but the nations also will experience the salvation of the Lord.

C. Israel's second lamentation (vv. 13-17). The first was in v. 4.

Here Israel expresses the fear that she has been forgotten.

But that is a needless fear. Human beings may forget their children, but the Lord cannot forget His own because of two things:

- 1) They are written on the palms of His hands.
- 2) Their walls are continually before Him. I.e., He never takes His eyes off of them, nor from the place which He has given to them.

D. Two other words of comfort (vv. 18-26).

1. The number of the redeemed will be so great that the land will not be able to hold them all (vv. 18-23).

Israel thought that her own sons had been lost, but not only do they come back, but they are brought by Gentiles who have turned to the Lord--kings and queens being among them.

2. The Lord Himself will punish the enemies of Israel (vv. 24-26).

In vv. 18-23 we are to think of the elect from among the Gentiles; in vv. 24-26, the non-elect.

E. The twofold purpose of the Messiah's work:

1. For the remnant of Israel (v. 23b).

" . . . and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

2. For the Gentiles (v. 26b).

" . . . and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am

thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob."

Concl: What are the special lessons of this chapter?

- 1) Obviously we are concerned here with a yet future time, and it fits right in with millennial prophecies, and leads on into eternity.

Great days are yet ahead before the culmination of all things. In fact, they are greater than anyone can possibly imagine. Not only will God's purpose for Israel be fulfilled, but there will be an unbelievable harvest among the Gentiles.

- 2) Vv. 1-4 show us two things:

- a) Regardless of all that the Lord has done for His people in Israel, and for us, if His work were dependent upon us, it would fail miserably and hopelessly!

But it is not dependent upon us. It is dependent upon the Lord's greater Servant, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

- b) Therefore, God's purposes are unchangeable. Note v. 3: "And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

Note the emphasis, "in whom." We are too often concerned that He might be glorified by us; He is concerned that He would be glorified "in" us--and then by us. The latter will not take place without the former.

(The NASB makes both of these passages refer to Christ as the only Servant in this chapter, but you see what you think is the meaning.)

- 3) The needless fears of the Lord's people:

- a) From v. 4 -- that the Lord's work will fail because we have failed.

Yet notice how the latter part of the verse expresses the hope that somehow God will intervene.

- b) From v. 14 -- that the Lord has forgotten us, and so has forsaken us.

But this is impossible. He has engraved us upon the palms of His hands. What could this be but a reference to the marks of the nails in His hands, the marks of His redemptive work. Is this not also particular redemption?

- 4) The great extent of the work of the Lord.

We must not think in terms of a few here, and a few there, even though the non-elect will outnumber the elect. "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14)--but still the redeemed are a vast multitude which no man can number. Cf. Rev. 7:9.

- 5) The need for patience in the Lord's work. Cf. v. 23b.

Again we see that the Lord is primarily concerned about what is going on in us, while we are inclined to be concerned about what He is doing through us.

Cf. Jas. 1:2-4.

- 6) The main reason that the Lord works in the way that He does--
that He might be known!

This is apparent in Exodus, and again in Ezekiel. This should be our main concern. This is why Paul prayed so much about wisdom and knowledge and their relationship to the Lord and His ways.

Finally,

- 7) The ultimate triumph of the Lord--for His people, and against His enemies.

What a chapter on the sovereignty of God!