

THE ADULT TEACHER

LESSON 10~ THE MESSIAH'S MISSION

DECEMBER 6, 2020

Background Scripture: Isaiah 49

Lesson Passage: Isaiah 49:1-8 (KJV)

Introduction: As always, it's important here to state the big story at work in Isaiah in order to grasp the power of Isaiah's proclamation in chapter 49. Isaiah 49, is a prophecy concerning Christ, and redemption by Him; and of the enlargement of the church in the latter day, by the conversion of Jews and Gentiles; which the isles, and people afar off, are exhorted to listen and hearken to, delivered out by the prophet, in the person of Christ.

God's people have been defeated. Their temple has been destroyed. They are taken in chains to Babylon, alienated from their land and their God. This exile is a crisis of identity and faith. Are they still God's people? How can they worship in this foreign land? Into this crisis, Isaiah speaks a word of hope in these chapters. God will send a servant who will do justice. Indeed, it appears that much of Isaiah (chapters 40-55), addresses the return of the Israelites to their homeland and the promise of a restored temple and nation. The disorientation of exile is replaced by a new orientation that is more than just returning to the way things were before exile. God has something much more in mind.

Scripture Reference: Isaiah 49:1-8 (KJV)

1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. 2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; 3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. 5 And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. 6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. 7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. 8 Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

Topic Explored: "The Messiah's Mission" ~ In telling us about the Servant, Isaiah is painting a picture, a portrait, of the Messiah. In popular Jewish thought, the Messiah is rough and tough, a warrior Who defeats all His enemies by military and political action. But Isaiah is painting another picture. In stroke after stroke Isaiah is leading us to see the Suffering Servant. This Servant saves by way of the cross and the grave.

Memory Verse: *7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee (Isaiah 49:7) KJV*

Lesson Focus: Isaiah 49:1-8 (KJV)

Verse 1 ~ The “servant” is a person who shall come forth from the Servant-Nation Israel. He is further commissioned to be a “light to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:47), as being fulfilled as Jesus Christ. The reference to the “covenant of the people” is to the New Covenant by which Christ will gather believers “from far.” The whole world, including Gentiles, are called to recognize two significant points: (1) The Messiah/Servant will be a human being, born as others are of a woman, yet virgin born (7:14; Luke 1:30-33); and (2) He will be an individual as distinct from a personified group such as the nation of Israel, which has also been called the Lord’s servant. The mention of the isles, and the people from afar, indicate that this message is for the whole world, because salvation through Jesus Christ is offered to the whole world.

Verse 2 ~ “*My mouth like a sharp sword*”: The Lord has given power to His servant to speak effectively and thereby to conquer His enemies (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15). His Word is always effective (John 1:14). This leaves no doubt that this is speaking of the Word of God proceeding out of the mouth of Jesus Christ. The mention of being hid was the fact that Jesus was hid from the earth and its people, until the fullness of time came, and He was revealed to mankind. The Word of the Lord Jesus is so keen and pure that it pierces the heart of man (Ephesians 6:7).

Verse 3 ~ “Thou art my servant, O Israel”. That the Lord’s use of the name Israel refers here to Messiah (Isaiah 42:1; 49:5-7; 52:13; 53:11), is explaining through the intimate relationship that exists between the nation and her King. The cross of Jesus glorified the Father (John 17:1). Jesus Christ is the head of all Israel, both physical, and spiritual Israel.

At His first coming, the Servant met with rejection by His nation. It may have appeared to some that His mission was a failure because of the suffering and rejection He endured (John 1:9-11). But, though rejected by men, the Servant expresses His strong assurance that He is doing God’s work and will be rewarded with complete success. There surely must have been much frustration felt when Jesus’ disciples did not understand the things that He taught them, when people saw His glorious miracles and works and then asked Him to show them a sign so that they might believe, when the religious leaders of Jerusalem constantly plotted how they might trick Him and somehow find a reason to put Him to death, etc., etc. Isaiah tells us that the justice that was due to God’s ‘ideal Servant’, he did not possess, instead that justice was ‘with the Lord.’

Verse 4 ~ "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing." Why does Isaiah talk this way? Why is he so depressed and discouraged? Isaiah has witnessed the Assyrian captivity of Israel, Judah's brother to the North. He has preached and prophesied and warned Judah and Jerusalem that the same will happen to her unless she repents. Yet, in spite of all his preaching, the moral and religious climate of Judah and Jerusalem continues to slide downhill. In spite of all the warnings he has given, Isaiah sees that his people are on a slippery slope to death and destruction, punishment and exile. To Isaiah, at least, it seems that his ministry is in vain, bears no fruit, and has no purpose because no one listens.

However, the real identity of the Servant is the Lord Jesus Christ. So, the passage in front of us is not so much about Isaiah as it is about Jesus, the true Servant of God. It is from the mouth of Jesus that we are to hear the words of our text: (Isaiah 49:4) "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing." Jesus, the Servant of God, sounds discouraged. Why would Jesus, the eternal and glorious Son of God, talk this way?

He talks this way in His state of humiliation. Don't forget, as a man He was weak and tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. In the Garden of Gethsemane, for instance, He struggled to do the will of God and He suffered the deep anguish of grief, trembling, and fear. He

complained more than once that the animals and birds, unlike Him, at least had a place to lay their head. He was rejected and despised not just by the leaders of the people but even by His own family. And consider His friends. Peter denied Him, Judas betrayed Him, and the rest forsook Him and fled for their lives. As for the crowds, they preferred the murderer Barabbas to Jesus. Also, don't forget how Jesus ended His life -- on the cross, cursed and forsaken not just by man but especially by God. Isaiah's second Servant song, then, points forward to the utter humiliation of our Lord not only upon the cross but also earlier.

Verse 5 ~ The Servant's mission will include the priority of bringing Israel to the Lord. He will complete this at His Second Advent (Zechariah 12:10 – 13:1). The sadness of all this was the rejection of Jesus by the house of Jacob. Jesus came to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. God sent His Son to the physical house of Israel, but few received Him as their Savior. The early church was made up primarily of Jews. The masses of the Hebrew people did not come to Christ, however. The priests, scribes, and Pharisees were the very ones who rejected Jesus. Jesus did not choose His apostles from among the teachers, or those in authority in the temple. He chose common laborers. He taught them His ways. The nation of Israel had been called to be a blessing to the nations and to be a light unto salvation for them, however instead they despised Gentiles and did not actively proselytize. However, God's 'ideal servant' is called to bring salvation to all of the ends of the earth, to both Jew and Gentile alike.

Verse 6 ~ Isaiah begins to further expound upon that special work that God's 'ideal servant' shall be sent to perform. He has already begun to tell us of the suffering that He shall experience for mankind, how His life is to be given in order that a new covenant might be made with the people. The 'ideal servant' is to be a 'light to the nations,' so that salvation could reach to the end of the earth. This again shows that "Servant" could only refer to Jesus and the work that He has done upon Calvary for the salvation of mankind.

The Servant's goal is the salvation and restoration of Israel for the fulfillment of the covenant promise. But not limited to Israel, He is to function as a light bringing salvation to the Gentiles. This passage moves from the very particular and powerful deliverance of Israel to an even larger mission. In an astonishing phrase God says that this restoration of Israel is "too light a thing" in and of itself. God's people do not exist for themselves alone, nor is their restoration an end in itself. God gathers God's people into God's life for one purpose: the salvation of the world. God charges Israel, God's servant, to be "a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth". God's story is always bigger than ours.

Verse 7 ~ "*Despiset ... abhorreth*" speak to the humiliating treatment of the Servant at His first advent. The unsaved world despises Jesus, because they realize they are doomed. We know just how far the hatred went when they cried out for Jesus to be crucified. Our sin nailed Jesus to the cross, and just belief in His name brings salvation.

"Kings shall see, and shall stand, [even] princes, and they shall prostrate themselves". This, in the presence of the Servant, who previously was "deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers"! However, when the Servant appears, kings will recognize His authority and acknowledge Him by rising from their thrones. Additionally, when the Servant comes, "kings" and "princes" accustomed to others' deference, not only will stand up from their own thrones; not only will they kneel; they will *lay themselves* out full-length, face-down upon the ground/floor in front of Him. Those used to command will relinquish their borrowed authority, rendering it back to Him to whom it rightly belongs. He is going to be rejected by the nation of Israel. Isaiah tells us that he will be 'abhorred by the nation'. He is going to be a 'Servant of rulers'. The nation of Israel had an

expectation of the “conquering Messiah” or “political Messiah” that was totally against what the scripture revealed about the Messiah. The Messiah’s first mission was to come to the earth as the “suffering servant” to bear the sins of the world and to procure salvation for mankind.

Verse 8 ~ The Messiah is represented as asking for the grace of God to be given to sinners. God gives His favorable answer in a time of grace (Isaiah 61:1), when salvation’s day comes to the world (Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 4:7). At His appointed time, the Lord will, by His Servant, accomplish the final deliverance of Israel. When the Lord saves and regathers Israel, they will return to the Land to which Joshua brought their ancestors after their exit from Egypt, now restored and glorious (Joshua 13:1-8). From the foundation of the earth, God had chosen a time for the salvation of man to be furnished through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. God made covenant with faithful Abraham that all the people of the earth would be blessed. The covenant is kept in Jesus (Galatians 3:29). *"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

Let’s talk about it. . .

Making it Personal:

Closing Prayer: *Thank You, Father, for giving me the Light of life in Jesus. I pray that I may so concentrate my gaze upon Him day by day, that I may live and move and walk and pray in a manner that is well-pleasing to You. In Jesus’ name I pray, AMEN.*