



"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"
ISAIAH 61:1

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 42

AND HIS NAME
WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER,
PRINCE OF
PEACE.
ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah is called "The Book of Salvation." The name *Isaiah* means "the salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation." Isaiah is the first book containing the writings of the prophets of the Bible. And the author, Isaiah, who is called the Prince of Prophets, shines above all the other writers and prophets of Scripture. His mastery of the language, his rich and vast vocabulary, and his poetic skill have earned him the title, "Shakespeare of the Bible." He was educated, distinguished, and privileged, yet remained a deeply spiritual man. He was committed to obedience over the long haul of his 55-60 year ministry as a prophet of God. He was a true patriot who loved his country and his people. Strong tradition suggests that he died a martyr's death under the reign of King Manasseh by being placed within the hollow of a tree trunk and sawed in two.

Isaiah's calling as a prophet was primarily to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, urging the people to repent from their sins and return to God. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the Lord. Many of his prophecies predicted events that occurred in Isaiah's near future, yet at the same time they foretold the events of the distant future (such as the coming of the Messiah), and even some events still to come in the last days (such as the second coming of Christ).

In summary, the message of Isaiah is that salvation comes from God—not man. God alone is Savior, Ruler and King.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

Book of Isaiah

Summary of Chapter 42

First Servant Song. Chapter 42:1-7. Summary and Comments

This is the first of four such songs. The others, which will be marked as we go along are: 49:1-9a; 50:4-9; 52:13 - 54:12.

First, there is no special reason for calling these songs. We keep the word only since it has become usual.

The word servant or servant of God is frequent in Scripture in general. It is used of Moses, Joshua, Job, David, Zerubbabel and often of the prophets like Ahijah, Elijah, Jonah or the other prophets in general.

Next we ask: Who is the Servant? There is no need to suppose the Servant is the same person in all four. The Targum marks the first and fourth as messianic, but not the others. The New Testament similarly indicates that the first and fourth are messianic, but does not do so for the other two.

Some have suggested the servant is a collective figure for Israel, or the faithful remnant. But the very personal terms used are against that view.

In Mt 12:17-21, after Jesus has worked some cures, we read that thus was fulfilled what Isaiah predicted. It then quotes substantially this first passage. We could still ask: Did the text of Isaiah refer directly to Christ, or only through a typological sense? Such combinations do occur at times. However, there is no good reason to suppose that happens here. Yet, we saw in commenting on 7:14 that it is quite possible that the Holy Spirit, the chief Author of Scripture, may have intended more in a given passage than what the human author saw. Such a thing is quite possible here especially with the first and fourth songs which definitely do look ahead to a Messiah.

In the first verse God says "I have put my spirit upon Him." We naturally think of the Messiah of Isaiah 11, on whom the Spirit will rest.

Then verses 2-3 say he will not put out a smoldering wick: He will be kind and merciful to the weak. We think of Jesus in Matthew 11:28: "Come to me all who find life burdensome. . . my yoke is easy." The smoldering wick could also refer to Israel languishing in exile.

Then in v. 4 He will not stop until He establishes justice (<mishpat>) in the Lord, and in His teaching (<torah>), then even the gentiles who are far off will have hope. They had walked in the darkness spoken of above in 9:1. In Hebrew <mishpat> this could be translated, <that which is right>. Before the coming of the Messiah the gentiles depended upon what the Spirit wrote upon their hearts (Jer 31:33 and Romans 2:15) to know this. But the Messiah will spell out the will of God to the nations, that they may more easily know and fulfill it. So He will be like another Moses, who made the will of God known explicitly to the people.

Verse 6 says he will be a covenant for the people and a light for the gentiles. Even though the singular is used, <people>, which seems to refer primarily to Israel, yet the following words, a light to the gentiles, foreshadows in a way what St. Paul was to say in Eph 3:6, a thing not revealed before, that the gentiles are co-heirs with the Jews as members of the People of God in the new covenant. And He is surely a light for the gentiles: cf. Luke 2:32 in the canticle of Simeon who says He will be "a light for the gentiles."

Finally: Thus says God the Lord who created the heavens and gives breath to all those who dwell on earth. This expresses His majestic power, which is also an assurance that the mission of the Servant will be fruitful. For God has called the Servant in righteousness (<sedeq>), He will free captives and those in the dungeon.

Thus ends the first Servant Song.

New things and a New Song. Chapter 42: 8-17. Summary and Comments

Now God speaks and says He is the Lord, and will not let idols take His glory. As proof; see that the former things predicted have taken place-- this could be the fall of Damascus and the northern Kingdom, and the frustration of Sennacherib. Since they have happened as predicted, Israel should trust in the further prediction that He will bring them out of exile.

Therefore all the ends of the earth should sing a new song to the Lord. Even the desert and its towns --like Kedar in North Arabia, and Sela, capital of Edom -- should join in the song. The words "the ends of the earth" can easily refer to the gentiles-- and this idea is aided by the mention of Kedar and Sela. In time, all nations are to praise the Lord. Israel did not understand this, as we saw in the introduction to Isaiah, yet it is true that as St. Paul foretold in Eph. 3:6 the gentiles are to be part of the People of God, and to join in praising Him.

Therefore as to the future: The Lord will march as a mighty warrior and triumph over the enemies of Israel. He has kept silent for some time during the Exile. The time was not right, and the demands of justice to pay the debt of Israel's sin had not yet been met by their suffering.

God asks: Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? This is remarkable, for in the first servant song, the servant is the Messiah. Now he calls Israel his servant and messenger. He intended them to bring the truth to the gentiles; but they have been blind, and instead have taken over the errors of the gentiles by worshipping false gods.

But now He is glad to hold back no longer. He announces the end of the exile, and, as he said in chapter 40, He will make the rough places plain. He will do all this for the sake of his righteousness (42:21:sedeq): This is the same as saying: His Holiness, for it is His Holiness that loves all that is right, and insists that if out of balance, it be restored. Now the suffering of the exile has restored the balance -- so far as mere humans could - the full rebalance is to come from the obedient sufferings of the Suffering Servant, Jesus, who thereby [<daetho>] will make many just: 53:11.

End of Chapter 42