

## NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

The Father put the Spirit upon Jesus (42:1; Matt 3:13-17).

Jesus was the one chosen by God (42:1; Luke 9:35).

Jesus did not come to be served but to serve (42:1; Matt 20:28).

Jesus established a new covenant in his blood for his people (42:6; Luke 22:20).

Jesus opened eyes that were blind (42:7; Matt 9:27-30; 11:5).

The problem is not the law but the sin of the people (42:21-22; Rom 7:7-20).

Jesus is the fulfillment of this passage (42:1-4 directly quoted in Matt 12:18-21; see also Luke 4:16-21).

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How did Jesus fulfill the role of the Servant? In what ways will he fulfill it in the future?

How is God's law "great and glorious" (v21)?

In what ways should you emulate the characteristics of the Servant?

## SOURCES CITED

John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, NICOT, 1998.  
Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, New American Commentary, 2009.

## ISAIAH 42: INTRODUCTION OF THE SERVANT

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 42

- I. The Servant establishes justice among the nations (42:1-9)
  - A. God's presentation of the Servant (42:1-4)
  - B. God's address to the Servant (42:5-7)
  - C. God's glory in declaring the future (42:8-9)
- II. All creation responds in praise (42:10-12)
- III. The Lord judges the earth and restores the repentant (42:13-17)
- IV. The Servant fails and is judged (42:18-25)
  - A. The Servant is blind (42:18-20)
  - B. The Servant is judged (42:21-25)

## NOTES

### **The “Servant Songs”**

“There is an atmospheric change at these four places in the text ([42:1-7]; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). It is difficult to define that change, yet most readers will acknowledge it. The language becomes more exalted and sweeping; the Servant is either left unidentified or identified in the broadest terms; the descriptions tend to be graphic and detailed; and there is a unique emphasis on what the Servant will accomplish for the world” (Oswalt 1998: 107-8).

### **The Identity of the Servant**

“In conclusion, since there are a variety of different attributes and identifying markers associated with the servant role in this book, one is naturally directed to the thesis that there are multiple “servant” figures in the Book of Isaiah, not just one person or group that fits all the passages where the word “servant” appears. There is no doubt that the nation of Israel is personified as the “blind servant” in 41:8-9, but the “servants” in 65:9-16 are a unique group of righteous Israelites who bear God’s name (not the whole nation). The prophet Isaiah was God’s servant in 20:3 and David was called God’s servant in 37:35, but the servant in the poem in 42:1-13 does not appear to be any of these. As each new servant passage is examined, the reader must compare and contrast the characteristics of this servant with the characterizations of other servant figures within the book in order to make an appropriate identification of the servant in that context. Initially a clear picture may not emerge, but when new servant roles are introduced and more is revealed about the servant in later passages, a clearer understanding of the identity of the servant figure will emerge” (Smith 2009: 156).

### **The Servant’s Mission**

“One cannot mistake the Servant’s mission since it is repeated in vv. 1, 3, and 4: he will bring *justice to the nations*. It is well known that Heb. *mišpāṭ* connotes much more than judicial equity. In its broadest sense it involves societal order in which the concerns of all are addressed. A society in which there is no *mišpāṭ* is one in which the only rule is brute force used to aggrandize the few. Thus the divine *mišpāṭ* that the Servant will establish is nothing less than the salvation of God defined in its broadest sense. We are not merely speaking of a privatistic forgiveness of sins, or of the imposition of a humanly designed system for redistribution of goods. This is that life-giving order which exists when the creation is functioning in accordance with the design of its Lord” (Oswalt 1998: 110).

### **A Compassionate King**

“This attitude of not destroying oppressed and suffering people reveals the compassionate and true servant perspective of this individual. No one is unworthy of help; no one will be treated harshly or as unimportant and expendable.... Kings often cared more about the accomplishment of a task, like getting a road built, and were minimally concerned about those who suffered in the process of fulfilling the king’s wishes. This verse demonstrates that God’s tender care for the weak and oppressed (1:17; 40:11) will be exemplified in the servant’s behavior” (Smith 2009: 163).