

(John 11:53; 15:19), but others believed in him (John 12:42). He was seen as a light to the nations (Matt 4:16; Luke 2:32) and the light of the world (John 1:9; 8:12; 12:35–36). Although Jesus fits the roles and experiences of this Servant, it is clear that the complete and final fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in 49:1–13 awaits a future day when God will transform nature and the hearts of people from the four corners of the earth” (Smith 356–57).

v14 “It is not necessarily a bad thing to want God’s kingdom to be established on earth right away or for his servant to want God to restore Israel now (49:6), but unchecked impatience with the timing of God’s plan can sometimes lead to doubt or even disillusionment” (Smith 2009: 364).

v16 “Instead of the master’s name being written on the servant’s hand, the servant’s name is written on the master’s hand. This is the divine condescension that we have come to expect throughout the book. The master does not expect the servant somehow to attain his height; rather, the master comes down to the servant’s place (11:1–4; 30:18; 57:15–16; 66:2)” (Oswalt 1998: 306).

vv22–23 “Now God is going to run up an ensign to call the nations to Israel again. But this time they will not come to destroy; instead, they will come with Zion’s builders, her children, on their shoulders and in their arms. But this thought is not completely new, for in 11:10, 12, he has already said that the Messiah will be this ensign who will call nations to himself. The connection between that passage and this one, sandwiched as it is between two Servant passages, confirms that the Servant is indeed to be identified with the Messiah” (Oswalt 1998: 310). Cf. 62:10.

Chapter 49 is quoted 3x in the NT: Acts 13:47, 2 Cor 6:2, Rev 7:16.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

In what ways did Jesus fulfill the predictions about the Servant in this chapter? In what ways will he yet fulfill them?

How is Jesus a “covenant for the people” (v8)?

If verses 14–26 are about the future of Israel, what value do they have for us who are not Israel?

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 49: THE SERVANT’S FAILURE AND SUCCESS

STRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 49–55

Servant poem	49:1–13
Salvation for Zion	49:14–50:3
Servant poem	50:4–11
Salvation for Zion	51:1–52:12
Servant poem	52:13–53:12
Salvation for Zion	54:1–17
Conclusion	55:1–13 (Smith 2009: 337)

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 49

- I. The instrument of Israel’s restoration: God’s servant (49:1–13)
 - A. Announcement to the world (49:1a)
 - B. The servant speaks of his preparation, purpose, and failure (49:1b–6)
 - C. The Lord informs the servant of his success (49:7–12)
 - D. Creation is called to worship because of God’s salvation of Israel (49:13)
- II. The certainty of Israel’s restoration: God’s promise (49:14–26)
 - A. Faithless response from Israel (49:14)
 - B. The Lord promises to bring Israel back from captivity (49:15–21)
 - C. The Lord will use the nations to restore Israel (49:22–26a)
 - D. Mankind will recognize that the Lord is Israel’s Savior (49:26b)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SERVANT IN CHAPTER 49

- He is God's servant (v3).
- He was destined for his mission before his birth (vv1, 7).
- He was carefully prepared by God for his mission (v2).
- He is called Israel (v3).
- His purpose is to restore the remnant of Israel (v6).
- He felt that he did not accomplish his purpose, but he trusts God for his reward (v4).
- He is strengthened by God (v5).
- He is given the task of bringing God's salvation to all mankind (v6).
- He was despised by the nation (v7).
- He will receive the submission of kings (v7).
- He is promised help by God (v8).
- He will be a covenant for the people (v8).
- He will restore the land to Israel (v8).
- He will bring the people back from captivity (v9).

THE SERVANT IN 49 COMPARED WITH SERVANT IN 42, 50, 53

Chapters 49 and 42: both are chosen by God, both are a covenant for the people, both are a light for the Gentiles, both release captives from prison, both bring sight to the blind, both bring glory to God.

Chapters 49 and 50: both do God's will, are helped by God, are rejected and are vindicated.

Chapters 49 and 53: both are exalted, rejected, and bring about Israel's restoration.

NOTES

"God has said that the lives of his servants, Israel, would be the evidence to the world that he alone is the Holy One....But how is that possible? Will God simply ignore the sin that projected Israel into slavery in the first place? How will the blind, deaf, rebellious servant Israel be any different just because Cyrus has sent them home? The answer is: the Servant, ideal Israel, will give himself to be for and in Israel what Israel could never be in itself" (Oswalt 1998: 286-87).

v1 Note "the prominence of the mother in many of the Messiah promises, including Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:2; and Ps. 22:10. When this point is then coupled with the idea of the Messiah being named before birth (Isa.

7:14; Matt. 1:21-23), one begins to think that this is not Israel who calls the nations to listen to his message but someone else" (Oswalt 1998: 289).

v3 "It is important to note that the term *Israel* is used not so much as a name as it is a parallel term to *servant*. It is as though the Lord had said, "You are my Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Thus it is the function, not the identity, of Israel that is emphasized. This Servant is going to function as Israel. What was Israel's task, as indicated throughout the entire book, from ch. 2 onward? To be the means whereby the nations could come to God....Faced with Israel's failure, God does not wipe out the nation; he simply devises another way in which Israel's servanthood could be worked out: through the ideal Israel" (Oswalt 1998: 291).

v4 "If the Servant described in this passage is more than human, he is not less than human. Frustration and feelings of futility, all too familiar to everyone who inhabits flesh, were part of the burden he came to bear. . . . No Christian can read these words without relating them to the ministry of Jesus Christ. When he died, what had he accomplished? To all appearances, nothing. By every measure of the world, his life had been futile" (Oswalt 1998: 292).

vv5-6 "Cyrus was needed to restore Israel to Judah, and the Servant was needed to restore Jacob to *him*, that is, to God. It is important not to overlook this point. Israel's real problem was not captivity in Babylon; it was estrangement from God. Who could solve that problem?" (Oswalt 293).

v6 "Here the Lord makes the astounding statement that the task of restoring Israel to himself is not a large enough task for the Servant. He is of such a nature, calling, and preparation that he should be given a larger task: saving the world!" (Oswalt 1998: 293-94).

v6 "Just how the Servant "will be" (not "bring" as in NIV) God's salvation will be explained in later oracles about the Servant (52:13-53:12)" (Smith 2009: 349).

vv1-12 "The New Testament saw Jesus as the fulfillment of this Servant prophecy. He exemplified a servant spirit throughout his life (Matt 20:28; Phil 2:7), and the new covenant was established through his blood (Luke 22:20). Jesus identified himself with the role of the one who would release those in prison and open the eyes of the blind (Luke 4:18-19), ideas that are found in Isa 42:7; 49:9, and 61:1-2. Jesus spoke words of compassion as well as sharp words of criticism (Matt 23). Certain rulers abhorred him