

## 9. To Serve and to Save (1Q 2021—Isaiah))

**Biblical Material:** Isaiah 41, Isa. 42:1–7, Isa. 44:26–45:6, Isa. 49:1–12.

### Quotes

- In other words, this servant would offer God an absolutely obstruction-free “void” within the realm of the human world and history, wherein God may act as the “Creator” of a new world, his world, the way he wants it: where the impossible is daily bread, and in place of the present reality in which the barren one cannot possibly conceive, “the children of the barren one are more than those of the one that is married.” *Paul Nadim Tarazi, The Chrysostom Bible - Isaiah: A Commentary*
- Faithful servants never retire. You can retire from your career, but you will never retire from serving God. *Rick Warren*
- We don't serve God to gain His acceptance; we are accepted so we serve God. We don't follow Him in order to be loved; we are loved so we follow Him. *Neil T. Anderson*
- To serve God, to love God, to enjoy God, is the sweetest freedom in the world. *Thomas F. Wilson*
- I long for nothing more earnestly than to serve God with all my might. *Charles Spurgeon*
- Love God, serve God; everything is in that. *Clare of Assisi*

### Questions

Why is Jesus identified as the “suffering servant”? What does this mean? How does Isaiah and then Jesus represent God? How does the aspect of prophetic insight work—and what are its implications? What relevance is there for us today in the attacks on idol worship? How does this material speak of God and of the issues involved in the cosmic conflict?

### Bible summary

Isaiah 41 is an encouragement to Israel that despite their suffering as God's servants, he will help them. It is also a condemnation of other nations and their idol worship. Isaiah 42:1-7 is a different servant, a specific individual, and is clearly a Messianic prophecy. Isa. 44:26–45:6 is specifically addressed to Cyrus, who appeared on the scene a century or so after the prophecy was given (this is the major reason for the idea of a “second Isaiah” writing after the events, since most modern scholars dismiss the concept of predictive prophecy).

### Comment

The latter part of Isaiah (from chapter 40 on) is described by some as deutero- or second Isaiah, written by a different author. While there are some stylistic arguments given, the main reason is that clear references (for example Cyrus in chapter 45) are given to future events. Because some dismiss such prophetic principles, and argue that the material must have been written after the event, they believe in a later author.

But if the Bible is really about God, why should such passages be problematic? It is only because of a preconception that such ideas are entertained. Accepting the foreknowledge of God, and that he has revealed some of this to his prophets, we see that God continues to work for his people, and provide sufficient evidence to believe. When examined in depth the argument for “deutero-Isaiah” seem particularly weak, with unproven assumptions about the meaning of the text being frequent. As demonstrated by the two major Isaiah Dead Sea scrolls (and others,

numbering at least sixteen different manuscripts), Isaiah was never presented as two separate documents.

There are several references to idols in these chapters. The significance is in the meaning given to such representations. For they “profit nothing” and are “utterly worthless.” Anything that replaces God as the primary focus of life is also found to be utterly worthless. Only God can save; only God can give the answers to the most important questions.

The servant imagery of Isaiah 42 represents Christ. In following God’s will (note Jesus’ comments about this during his life), Jesus is not putting himself into the role of an unthinking, uncaring servant/slave, but in a lower role as we are. This is not to encourage “servant talk,” but to explain Jesus’ condescension to come here as one of us to reveal God in a way we can see.

The very specific description of Cyrus is also one of the most intriguing aspects. God calls him “my shepherd,” and he is credited with the first command to rebuild Jerusalem.

Most of all, these chapters help us see God, once again trying to work for his people, looking to seek and to save that which was lost. God is providing the evidence; helping his children see that there is sufficient reason to believe. God is working to show that he is one to be trusted, not the foolish idols that we choose to believe in. It’s interesting that we feel we have to believe in something, and even atheism is defined by the God that is not believed in. The goal is to see God as he is, working for all of his fallen children, working to win them back to himself.

### **Ellen White comments**

Jesus is our example. There are many who dwell with interest upon the period of His public ministry, while they pass unnoticed the teaching of His early years. But it is in His home life that He is the pattern for all children and youth. The Saviour condescended to poverty, that He might teach how closely we in a humble lot may walk with God. He lived to please, honor, and glorify His Father in the common things of life. His work began in consecrating the lowly trade of the craftsmen who toil for their daily bread. He was doing God’s service just as much when laboring at the carpenter’s bench as when working miracles for the multitude. And every youth who follows Christ’s example of faithfulness and obedience in His lowly home may claim those words spoken of Him by the Father through the Holy Spirit, “Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth.” Isa. 42:1. {DA 74}

[Isa. 42:1, 2 quoted.] He [Christ] will not be like the teachers of His day. The ostentation and show and parade of piety revealed in the priests and Pharisees is not His way. [Isa. 42:3, 4 quoted.] Christ saw the work of the priests and rulers. The very ones who needed help, the afflicted, the distressed, were treated with words of censure and rebuke, and He forbore to speak any word that would break the feeble reed. The dimly burning wick of faith and hope, He would encourage, and not quench. He would feed His flock like a shepherd; He would gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom (MS 151, 1899). {4BC 1146}

The more we think about Christ’s becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem’s manger is still the divine Son of God? Though we cannot understand it, we can believe that He who made the worlds, for our sakes became a helpless babe. Though higher than any of the angels, though as great as the Father on the throne of heaven, He became one with us. In Him God and man became one, and it is in this fact that we find the hope of our fallen race. Looking upon Christ in the flesh, we look upon God in humanity, and see in Him the brightness of divine glory, the express image of God the Father (Selected Messages, book 3, pp. 127, 128). {LHU 75}