

A Light for the Nations

Isaiah 49:1-13

Imagine walking into this auditorium on a dark, overcast day without turning the lights on. You would proceed carefully; you might stumble and bump your way along. If you had never been in the auditorium before, you would have to creep along (so that you don't hurt your shins). Gradually, a general idea of how the auditorium is laid out would begin to emerge. Your great need would be for someone to turn the lights on for you. This is what the New Testament does for us. There is light in the Old Testament; there is brilliantly clear light in the New Testament – because it testifies of Jesus. For instance, in today's text, we are told that the Servant would be a light to the Gentiles. In John 8:12, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." Revelation 21:23 tells us "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." So in today's text, we learn to love and lean upon the Lord who is the light of the nations.

Isaiah 40-66 has been called "the book of comfort." *How* does God comfort us? Chapters 40-48 give us comfort by describing God's nature and character as our Royal Redeemer. Chapters 49-66 lay the emphasis on salvation and restoration. Isaiah 49:1-13 describes God's Servant whom He would send.ⁱ

Who is the Servant?

When you read verse 3, you see that the Servant is called, "Israel." Who is this? Earlier in this book, the nation of Israel is referred to as God's servant.ⁱⁱ Yet verses 5-6 tell us that Jacob/Israel will be delivered by this Servant. Verse 7 tells us that the Servant is worthy of worship – meaning that He is God. One of the better-known Servant songs is Isaiah 53. In Acts 8, we read the story of a high official from Ethiopia who was reading Isaiah 53. The evangelist, Philip, came alongside him to ask if he understood what he was reading. According to Acts 8:34-35, the official asked Philip, "Who is the prophet speaking about, himself? Or some other man?" In one of the most enlightening connections in Scripture, "Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus!"ⁱⁱⁱ Today, we can rejoice in the fact that this Servant is Jesus the Christ. As Jesus said, He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.^{iv}

How would God the Father prepare His Servant for His mission?

- **The Father would issue His calling to Him while He was still in the womb: naming Him by name. v. 1**

Remember what the angel told Joseph about Mary's child? "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21).

- **His mouth would be like a sharp sword or arrow with piercing words, vs.2-3**

When the chief priests and Pharisees wanted the officers to arrest Jesus, what did the officers say? "No one ever spoke like this man!" (John 7:46). Jesus spoke with authority (Mark 1:27).

- **He would be like a secret weapon, hidden in the quiver and ready for use. vs. 2-3**

How would Jesus be like a secret weapon? They expected kings to be haughty, but He was humble. He was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). He is the highway to heaven. But the highway to heaven is hidden in humility; the path to punishment is paved with pride.

What problems would the Servant face?

- He would face severe frustration suspecting that He had labored in vain and wasted His energies for nothing. v. 4
- Yet He would comfort Himself with the knowledge that God would judge His work and reward Him appropriately. v.5

What was His God-given purpose?

- To glorify God, v. 5.
- To bring Israel back to God, vs. 5-6
- To be a light to the Gentiles and proclaim God's salvation to the ends of the earth, v. 6
- To be worshiped and adored by kings and leaders, because the Holy One of Israel has accomplished this purpose, v. 7
- To deliver those in bondage and lead them as a shepherd, vs. 8-12

What should be our response to this glorious truth?

- Listen and pay close attention, v.1
One of the best ways to do this would be to search the Scriptures. Why not read through the Bible this year? You could do it in 15 minutes each day. We recommend the reading schedule from [Tabletalk magazine](#). (We have placed copies at the Welcome Center.)
- Trust Him for light and salvation, v. 6
- Worship Him, v.7
- Trust Him for deliverance and protection, vs. 9-12
- Sing and be joyful! vs. 13

This year, let's ask the Lord to turn the light on for us. Let's we learn to love and lean upon the Lord who is the light of the nations.

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ⁱ Though many of the verbs in this passage are in the past tense, this is what is known as “the prophetic perfect.” In other words, the fulfillment of the prophecy is so certain that it is as if it had already happened.

ⁱⁱ Isaiah 41:8; 44:1, 21. Some have proposed that Isaiah himself was the Servant. Others point to Isaiah 44-45 to indicate the Cyrus was the Servant (see Ezra 6:3, Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

ⁱⁱⁱ The Gospel of Matthew makes the same connection: the Servant in Isaiah is Jesus Christ. See Isaiah 42:1-4 and compare it with Matthew 12:10-21.

^{iv} Matthew 20:28