

September 2nd, 2018
"A Light for the Nations"
Isaiah 49:1-7

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Aug 26 Jeremiah 49-50 Aug 30 Ezekiel 1-4
Aug 27 Jeremiah 51-52 Aug 31 Ezekiel 5-8
Aug 28 Lam 1-3:36 Sept 1 Ezekiel 9-12
Aug 29 Lam 3:37-5:22 Sept 2 Ezekiel 13-15

Lesson Introduction: Our passage this week introduces a large section of Isaiah devoted to the sufferings of Christ. This chapter speaks of the Lord's plan to send His Son as the Savior for all nations. As we go we will look at **the Lord's perfect timing in revealing His servant, a foreshadowing of rejection, and a glorious purpose.**

Key Memory Verses: Isaiah 49:6

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **The Lord executes His plans in with perfect timing (V. 1-3).**
- **The Lord accomplishes His plans, even when things look bleak (V. 4)**
- **Christ came for the nations (V. 6).**

Isaiah 49

1 Listen to me, O coastlands,
and give attention, you peoples from afar.
The Lord called me from the womb,
from the body of my mother he named my name.

2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword;
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow;
in his quiver he hid me away.

3 And he said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

4 But I said, "I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my right is with the Lord,
and my recompense with my God."

5 And now the Lord says,
he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,

to bring Jacob back to him;
and that Israel might be gathered to him—
for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord,
and my God has become my strength—

6 he says:
"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

7 Thus says the Lord,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation,
the servant of rulers:
"Kings shall see and arise;
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves;
because of the Lord, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Discussion Section 1: The Lord's Perfect Timing in Revealing His Servant (V. 1-3)

-Who is the servant referenced in these verses?

-Why is the servant called, "*Israel*"?

Note: The servant spoken of in this passage is none other than the Messiah, Jesus Christ. We know this by the fact that this servant is meant to be the one by which Israel returns to God, and are gathered back in (V. 5), and by the fact that He is to be "**a light for the nations, that my (God's) salvation may reach to the end of the earth**" (V. 6). One might wonder why Christ would be referred to here as, "*Israel*." Andrew M. Davis explains in **Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Isaiah**, by stating:

"The best way to understand Jesus being called "*Israel*" in verse 3 is to see Him as the perfect fulfillment of all that Israel was meant to be. God called His people in Egypt "*Israel*" and His "**firstborn son**" (Exodus 4:22). God chose Israel to be a priest nation (Exodus 19:5-6) by which the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled: "**all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you**" (Genesis 12:3). Jesus would perfectly embody all that Israel was meant to be as God's "**firstborn Son**." This is made clear in that the prophecy of Hosea 11:1, "**out of Egypt I called my son**," is applied to Jesus (Matthew 2:15)."

-What does it mean that Jesus was called “**from the womb**”?

-Why was Christ hidden away (V. 2)?

-What would Jesus’s service result in (V. 3)?

Note: It is important that we do not read verse 2 with an understanding that Jesus was formed just as we were, having a physical birth that began His existence. The Scriptures affirm clearly that Christ is not a created being, but one of the three eternally existing members of the Godhead (**Genesis 1:26, John 1:1-18, John 17:5**). It is better then, to read this passage as a foretelling of the events to come. Although He had existed eternally, there was coming a day when He would be born in the flesh, and the Lord had planned all His earthly ministry before the foundation of the world (**1 Peter 1:19-20**). God held Him back for many years, until the just the right time (**Romans 5:6-8, Galatians 4:4-5**). His timing was perfect, and in sending Jesus according to His perfect timing, as an arrow or a sword that would pierce hearts, God ensured that His Servant would glorify Him perfectly.

Discussion Section 2: A Foreshadowing of Rejection (V. 4)

-What is meant by “**I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity**”?

-How might it have seemed like Christ’s labor on earth was in vain?

-What does the last part of V. 4 tell us about the Servant’s confidence in the Lord’s plan?

Note: We see in this section a foreshadowing of the rejection that Christ would endure. It might seem strange for us to hear a prophesy about the Christ saying that He labored in vain. This is meant to point to the constant hard-heartedness He encountered on earth, which culminated in His crucifixion. Throughout His ministry, Jesus dealt with not only the doubt and unbelief of the pharisees and scribes, but even of His closest disciples (**Mark 10:11-21**). He would be mocked and put to death by those who once gathered to see Him perform signs and wonders, and in that hour, even His disciples would abandon Him (**Mark 14:27**). Looking at such a ministry through our fleshly eyes would certainly cause many of us to feel that it was all for naught. Without the full

story, we might deem the ministry of Jesus a failure by human standards.

However, the Servant knew the full story. Although He realized that much of His earthly ministry would seem to be done in vain, His hope was in doing the Lord’s will, and knowing that His Father would accomplish all that He set out to do (**Isaiah 46:10, Psalm 115:3, Proverbs 19:21**). What incredible comfort and assurance we have in times of despair, that we can say with Christ, “**yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God.**”

Discussion Section 3: A Glorious Purpose (V. 6)

-What is meant by, “**it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel**”?

-What more expansive purpose did the Lord have in mind for His servant to accomplish?

Note: Incredibly, even though things looked bleak during the earthly ministry of Jesus, God had a glorious purpose in mind. Not just that Christ would come as the savior of the Jews, but “**as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**” The glory of the Lord revealed through the salvation brought about in Christ must not be concealed for only the Israelites to revel in, it must shine out into all nations. What looked like a failed ministry to the disciples as their leader was taken to be nailed to a cross, turned out to be great victory over sin and death, which would benefit God’s people from every nation, tribe, and tongue into eternity! Incredibly, God has brought about salvation for the nations through the death and resurrection of His Servant, Jesus Christ, and we are partakers in this glorious truth. Not only do we benefit from it, but we too are meant to carry this light to the nations, and indeed we are equipped to by the power of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 1:8**). The Lord has great love for people from every nook and cranny of the globe, and great zeal for making His glory known to them. Paul applied **verse 6** of our passage today to His ministry (**Acts 13:47**), and we, too, have the privilege of getting to be the torch bearers, shining the light for the nations!