



Isaiah 42-44: Behold, My Servant

The way the gracious Creator God will fulfil his covenant promises to Israel, despite her own failure as his servant, is to raise up his chosen Servant, the Messiah, who will come to redeem Israel from sin and pour out his Holy Spirit upon them.

Key Verses

Isaiah 42:1-9; 43:1-7, 24-25; 44:2-3, 21-22

The Argument of Isaiah 42-44

After the flood, the nations again rebelled against God. So God created Israel as his chosen servant (Is 43:1; 44:1-2) through whom he promised to bless all the nations. This is called the Abrahamic covenant.

Israel's sin and rejection of God's Torah instruction under the Mosaic covenant caused her to become spiritually blind and deaf, and plundered and exiled by foreign nations (Is 42:18-25; 43:24-25). She failed as God's servant (Is 42:19).

But God promises to be with Israel in her exile (Is 43:5). She is not to fear (Is 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8). She will go through flood and fire, but she will not be destroyed (Is 43:2). Israel is precious in God's sight, and he loves her (Is 43:4). God promises Israel's sons and daughters will one day return to the land of Israel from the four corners of the earth (Is 43:5-6). There will be a new exodus (Is 43:19), such that the first exodus is not remembered (Is 43:18). It is God's third servant, Cyrus, through whom this will be accomplished (Is 44:8).

But Israel's returning to the land won't be enough. The real problem is Israel's sinful, hardened heart toward God. What she really needs is the inauguration of the new covenant—forgiveness of sin, circumcised hearts, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit—hinted at hundreds of years earlier by Moses (Dt 30:6). Only then will Israel be able love God with all her heart and soul and truly live (Dt 30:6). But how is this new covenant to be inaugurated?

God's solution to Israel's sin is his own Spirit-empowered Servant, the Messiah (Is 42:1). He is to be the new covenant for Israel and a light for the nations (Is 42:6). The Servant's objective will be to bring forth justice (צדק) to the nations (Is 42:1-4). He will do this by opening the eyes of the spiritually blind, releasing prisoners from the dungeon of sin and death (Is 42:7), and teaching his Torah instructions to the nations (Is 42:4).

The Servant, though, will need to come in two stages. His first coming will be gentle and quiet (Is 42:2-3). He will redeem Israel (Is 43:14; 44:6) by blotting out her transgressions (Is 43:25; 44:22) so that God won't remember her sins any longer (Is 43:25). The redemption will also allow God to pour out his Spirit and undeserved blessing (Is 44:3). The Servant's

second coming will be forceful and loud (Is 42:13-16). The he will go out like a mighty warrior, crying out as he crushes his enemies (Is 42:13).

Based on all of this, God's invitation to Israel is not to fear, but to return to him, for her redemption is certain (Is 44:22-24). Redemption is "paying a price to save someone." Yeshua paid the price to save Israel and all humanity by dying on the cross and rising from the dead.

All this shows that Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, is the one, true Creator God (Is 44:6, 8, 24). The idols and those who make them are nothing (Is 42:8-9; 44:9) and will be put to shame (Is 44:9-11). Time and again, God tells the future and then performs it (Is 44:7-8, 26-28). This the idols cannot do (Is 41:21-24).

As God's chosen servant (Is 43:10; 44:21), Israel is to be a witness of this fact (Is 43:8-13; 44:8). In his redemption of sinful Israel (Is 44:22-23), God will have clearly demonstrated his sovereignty, faithfulness, and grace to all humanity. The proper response of mankind is to sing praise to God (Is 42:10-12), along with all of creation (Is 44:23).

Application

1. Understand the biblical story. Remember the four stages of the biblical story and what they mean: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration.
2. Celebrate God's undeserved grace. Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. It's getting tons of good things we don't deserve based on Yeshua's death and resurrection. Say no to self-righteousness and yes to the free, undeserved righteousness God is willing to give us on the basis of grace. Return to God, for he has redeemed us through Yeshua.
3. Take full advantage of the new covenant. Though not the original beneficiaries of the new covenant promises—forgiveness of sin, heart circumcision, and the pouring out of the Spirit—the New Testament makes very clear church age Gentile believers surprisingly have received all these benefits of the new covenant. This is the basis of our new way of life—not by the flesh, but by the Spirit.
4. Take your place as a servant among God's people. So far in Isaiah 40-44, we have seen four servants: Israel, Isaiah, Cyrus, and Messiah. But did you know that, as the church, we are servants, too?
 - a. There are many ways to be a servant in our local church. Our church is built on service to one another. We don't depend on one person, a pastor, to do all the serving. That is not our culture. We are decentralised. The Spirit is powerfully working within every one of us. When we see a need, we meet it. I have seen this time and again during my two years at this church. As an example, Ben Hardie has recently stepped up his service at our church, offering to lead worship, host a house church along with his wife Jodie and their family, serve on our trust board, and minister to youth every



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Friday evening at Tu Kaha. He's just one example. We have a church of servants, which is why we have been able to thrive in the past two years despite significant challenges in our world, nation, and community. We started with 20; now we're up around 70. But it's not just the quantity growth but the quality growth that has been really encouraging.

- b. With our growth, though, comes the need to become more adept at coordinating pastoral care needs. There are many in our church and community with physical, medical, financial, legal, familial, and mental health needs, some of which are quite complex. In order to handle some of these needs, Marj Copland and Di Davies have initiated, under the guidance of the elders, a new pastoral care coordination team (PCCT). It will be the job of this team, not to do all pastoral care in the church, but to make sure no one is falling through the cracks and to handle some needs that are beyond the experience, training, and expertise of most of us. If you are pastorally caring for someone, please continue to do so. We need as many pastoral carers in our church as possible. But we do ask you would communicate to Marj and Di who you are caring for and also to make them aware of any personal needs in our church community that are not being adequately addressed. If you yourself need help during the Omicron outbreak or beyond, we want you to know the elders, the PCCT, and the entire church are there for you. Let us know how we can help. Don't suffer in silence. Give us the opportunity to be the servants Yeshua has called us to be.

Discussion Questions

1. What New Testament passages come to mind as we think of Yeshua as God's Servant?
2. What is God's grace and why is it so important?
3. What is the new covenant? Are we really recipients of the new covenant? What about Israel?
4. How is God calling you to be a servant this coming week?