

The Life and Times of Isaiah

The Uniqueness of the Servant of the Lord, Isaiah 41-53

The Four "Servant Songs"

Scholars commonly identify four poetic sections as the "Servant Songs" (or "Songs of the Servant of the Lord"), where the figure is described in detail:

Isaiah 42:1–9 Gentle servant bringing justice to the nations.

Isaiah 49:1–13 Servant called from the womb, mission to restore Israel and be a light to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 50:4–11 Obedient servant who suffers but trusts God.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 The exalted yet suffering servant who bears sins and makes many righteous.

First Servant Song: Isaiah 42:1–9

Introduces the servant as God's chosen one, upheld by the Spirit, who will gently bring justice to the nations without fanfare.

Key opening: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights..." (42:1).

Second Servant Song: Isaiah 49:1–13

The servant speaks of being formed from the womb, tasked with restoring Israel and becoming "a light for the nations" so God's salvation reaches the ends of the earth.

Third Servant Song: Isaiah 50:4–11

The servant describes learning obedience through suffering, offering his back to those who strike him, and trusting in God amid rejection.

Fourth Servant Song: Isaiah 52:13–53:12

The longest and most famous, depicting the servant's humiliation, vicarious suffering for the sins of many ("he was pierced for our transgressions"), death, and ultimate vindication/exaltation. This is the classic "Suffering Servant" passage.

Isaiah 40:18-20 To whom then will you liken God?...As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, a goldsmith plates it with gold, and a silversmith fashions chains of silver. He who is too impoverished for such an offering selects a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman to prepare an idol that will not totter.

Isaiah 41:4 “Who has performed and accomplished it, calling forth the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last. I am He.’”

Isaiah 41:28-29 “But when I look, there is no one, and there is no counselor among them who, if I ask, can give an answer. “Behold, all of them are false; Their works are worthless, their molten images are wind and emptiness.

Isaiah 42:1-4 “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street.”

Isaiah 42:3-4 “A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.”

Matthew 12:15-16 But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, and warned them not to tell who He was.

Matthew 12:17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

Matthew 12:18-19 “Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel, nor cry out; Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.”

Matthew 12:20-21 “A battered reed He will not break off, And a smoldering wick He will not put out, Until He leads justice to victory. And in His name the Gentiles will hope.”

Isaiah 42:5 Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it,

Isaiah 42:6 “I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, and I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations”

Isaiah 42:7 “To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.”

Isaiah 42:8-9 “I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.”