

## **Isaiah 50–55** *Servant Songs*

### **Introduction:**

There are four “Servant Songs” in Isaiah that prophesy concerning the coming of Jesus (42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). The New Testament makes it very clear that these prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ who, as the perfect sacrifice, died in our place to reconcile us to God so we now have peace with Him.

These passages, however, are not without exegetical and interpretation challenges. One of the most difficult challenges comes in determining the interconnected, yet distinct, identities of the Messiah and Israel as the “Servant of the Lord.” It can be difficult to sort out which voice is speaking in the text and which servant is the primary or secondary reference. Through a New Testament lens, the general picture clearly portrays the Servant as Jesus, but the Old Testament specifics can be complicated.

Israel, as the people of God, was rebellious and unfaithful. They were sent into captivity in Babylon because of their sin. Consequently, Israel became blind and deaf—failing as the Lord’s servant to be the light to the Gentiles.

The Messiah—as predicted in these Isaiah passages, stands in stark contrast to Israel. Unlike the rebellious nation, the Messianic “Servant” is obedient, righteous, and willing to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the benefit of Israel and the nations.

In this class we will look closely at the four Servant Songs. To do so, we will need first to look back in more detail at the first and second songs in chapters 42 and 49. There seems to be a progression among the songs as they move from one to another. At first the Servant’s role is highlighted as one who rules in justice. By the fourth servant song it becomes apparent that the text is referring not to the nation, but an individual who would Himself become the sacrifice that brings peace with God for Israel and the nations.

### **I. Servant Song #1 (Isaiah 42:1-4)**

**The Servant will bring salvation and restore proper order to the whole earth.**

- A. (vs. 1-4) The Servant will bring about worldwide justice
  - 1. (vs. 1) Through the presence of the Holy Spirit
    - a) God will accomplish His purposes through the Servant and those purposes will succeed because God will sustain His Servant with the presence of His Holy Spirit.
    - b) The endowment of the Holy Spirit was a gift to empower the leaders of Israel throughout the Old Testament.

- c) There are therefore overtones of kingship with this Servant.
2. (vs. 1b) The Servant will bring justice to all the nations, not just to Israel.
    - a) The term “justice” (מִשְׁפָּט / mišpāt) needs to be understood in its broad sense—to bring a just order to the earth. That is, to set things right (because sin and rebellion have perverted God’s right order).<sup>1</sup>
    - b) The Servant will set things right, not only for Israel in captivity in Babylon, but for the entire earth in captivity to sin.
  3. (vs. 2) Will not cry aloud or lift up his voice
    - a) The understanding here is that He will not be an ostentatious, self-glorifying person.
    - b) The image is one of humility (c.f. Phil. 2:5-8).
    - c) Also compare to the quiet presence of Christ throughout His trial and then crucifixion.
  4. (vs. 3) He will not break a bruised reed.
    - a) He will minister to hurting people.
    - b) “Thus the verse maybe interpreted to mean that the servant neither laments from discouragement in oppressive conditions nor becomes

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning (מִשְׁפָּט / mišpāt) see F. Duane Lindsey, “Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Call of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 139, no. 553 (1982): 17-18.

“The primary meaning of the noun מִשְׁפָּט (‘justice’) is that of a judicial decision or sentence (e.g., Num. 27:21; Deut. 16:18; 1 Kings 3:28; 20:40). A variety of derived meanings also relate in some way to the judicial process, such as the act of deciding (Deut. 25:1; Josh. 20:6), the place of decision (Deut. 25:1; 1 Kings 7:7), the process of litigation (Isa. 3:14; Job 22:4; Ps. 143:2), the case presented for litigation (Ezek. 23:24; 1 Kings 3:11; Job 13:18), the time of judgment (Ps. 1:5), and the execution of the sentence (Jer. 7:5; Ezek. 18:8). However, מִשְׁפָּט ‘can be used to designate almost any aspect of civil or religious government,’ such as sovereignty (Deut. 1:17; Jer. 8:7) or magisterial authority (Ps. 72:1-2), the attribute of justice employed by civil leaders (Mic. 3:1), an ordinance of law (Exod. 15:25; Lev. 5:10; 9:16; Deut. 33:10, 21), or one’s right under law (Deut. 18:3; Jer. 32:7). מִשְׁפָּט also has the meaning of that which is fitting or proper (1 Kings 5:8; Isa. 28:26; 40:14). The related verb מִשַּׁפ (‘to judge, govern’) in its primary sense means ‘to exercise the processes of government,’ whether legislative, executive, or judicial. God Himself is ‘the Judge of all the earth’ (Gen. 18:25; cf. Isa. 33:22) and has delegated this function of judging or governing to His theocratic representatives (but not to prophets) such as Moses (Exod. 18:13), the judges (e.g., Deborah [Judg. 4:5] and Samuel [1 Sam. 7:6, 15]), and the kings (1 Sam. 8:19-20; Ps. 72:1-3, 12-15).”

... “Thus the conclusion of Kelley regarding the meaning of מִשְׁפָּט in these verses seems to be justified. He understands מִשְׁפָּט in this passage to refer to ‘a just order,’ that is, the kind of life that will prevail on earth when all nations are brought under God’s rule, to be accomplished through the instrumentality of God’s servant.”

defeated, but rather perseveres in the task of administering justice.”<sup>2</sup>

5. (vs. 4) He will not grow faint or discouraged till he has succeeded in bringing justice on earth.

B. (vs. 5-7) In addition, the following verses add...

**(Isa 42:5-7 / ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it:

<sup>6</sup> "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

<sup>7</sup> to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

a) (vs. 5) Here God and Lord are equated. He is the Creator of heaven and earth—the Servant is His special emissary.

b) (vs. 6a) The Lord calls the Servant in righteousness.

c) (vs. 6b) And the Lord will take Him by the hand and guide Him.

d) (vs. 6c) He is a covenant for Israel—that is, the fulfillment of God's covenants to them.

e) (vs. 6d) But He will also be a light for the nations.

f) (vs. 7) He will open the eyes of the blind and release prisoners.

C. Conclusion for the first Servant Song

“The anonymous servant of Isaiah 42:1-9 can be neither Israel nor Cyrus nor any person other than the royal Davidic Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. This first servant song introduces the servant and highlights the successful completion of the task to which He is divinely called. Only a hint is given of the pathway of suffering that the servant must tread to arrive at the glory of a completed mission when He will have caused a righteous order to prevail on the earth. He will bring in a just order on the earth following His second advent at the time of the fulfillment of the promised New covenant for the

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<sup>2</sup> F. Duane Lindsey, “Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Call of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 139, no. 553 (1982): 20.

nation Israel. Gentiles also will benefit from the worldwide blessings of this covenant and kingdom.”<sup>3</sup>

## II. Servant Song #2 (Isaiah 49:1-13)

### The Servant will restore and gather Israel and save the nations.

#### A. Distinguishing characteristics of this second Servant Song

The second Servant song (Isa. 49:1-13) brings out the same basic concepts as the first poem, though the establishment of a worldwide righteous order is not stressed. Instead greater emphasis is placed on the physical and spiritual restoration of the nation Israel. The primary new feature in the second song is the apparent initial failure of the Servant in His mission to Israel which brings about an expanded commission from Yahweh to bring salvation to the Gentiles.<sup>4</sup>

#### B. (vs. 1-6) The Servant’s expanded mission to the Gentiles

1. (vs. 1) “Before I was born the Lord called me...”
  - a) The immediate referent would be Cyrus the Great
  - b) The extended referent is Jesus (who was not born)
  - c) The focus is on the Servant’s call.
2. (vs. 2) The focus is now on the Servant’s proclamation of the Word of God. This reference is probably not as characteristic of Cyrus as it would be of Jesus.
  - a) C.f. John 1:1 where Jesus Himself is the “Word” of God incarnate
  - b) C.f. Revelation 1:16 with the sword that comes from the mouth of the Lord
3. (vs. 3) The reference here to “Israel” has been problematic for some commentators.
  - a) Israel has seen itself as the servant of the Lord and to this day Jewish commentators will take these Servant Songs as referring to the nation of Israel.
  - b) It’s best to understand this reference as equating the individual of the Servant with the corporate nation in function. That is, Jesus

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<sup>3</sup> Lindsey, “Isaiah’s Songs of the Servant: The Call of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9,” 27.

<sup>4</sup> F. Duane Lindsey, “Isaiah’s Songs of the Servant: The Commission of the Servant in Isaiah 49:1-13,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 139, no. 554 (1982): 129.

fulfills in himself what the nation of Israel failed to do as the servant of the Lord.

4. (vs. 4) This verse speaks of the sense of a vain labor, yet the Servant trusts in the Lord. It may speak to the agony of the cross. Yet, compare to Hebrews 12:2.

**(Heb 12:1-2 / ESV)**

- <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
  - <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
5. (vs. 5) The Servant was to bring Jacob back to the Lord. That is, Jesus would be the Messiah for Israel.

**(Zec 12:10 / ESV)**

- <sup>10</sup> "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.
6. (vs. 6-8) But, the Servant will also bring the Gentiles to salvation.

"This twofold fulfillment of the Servant's mission (Gentile and Jewish aspects) corresponds with the literary genre of the passage which consists of two oracles or announcements of salvation — one concerning the worship of the Gentiles (v. 7) and the other regarding the restoration of Israel (w. 8-12). Thus the development of the unit is twofold: (1) Yahweh promises His despised Servant that the Gentiles will worship Him (v. 7) and (2) Yahweh promises His Servant that at the appointed time He will restore Israel in safety from all over the earth (w. 8-12)."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> F. Duane Lindsey, "Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Commission of the Servant in Isaiah 49:1-13," *Bibliotheca sacra* 139, no. 554 (1982): 139.

- C. (vs. 7-13) The fulfillment of the Servant's mission is guaranteed by the Lord.
1. (vs. 7-8) The Servant will be a covenant to the people (Israel)—that is, He is the fulfillment of God's covenants to Israel. Jesus is the focal point and fulfillment of God's covenants to the nation.
    - a) The Servant will establish the land (c.f. Abrahamic Covenant)
    - b) He will apportion the desolate heritages.
    - c) Note the connection here between the Servant and the land of Israel. The nation is tied to the land (c.f. Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants).
  2. (vs. 9-10) He will set the prisoners free
    - a) The immediate reference would be encouragement to the captives in Babylon.
    - b) The future fulfillment is to the sinners of the world set free from the penalty, power, and ultimately presence of sin.
    - c) He will lead, protect, and nurture the nation of Israel (this fulfillment comes in the millennial kingdom).
  3. (vs. 11-12) He will gather the nation of Israel from throughout the world and will return them to the Promised Land.
  4. (vs. 13) All will rejoice as the Servant comforts and restores Israel (and brings peace to the world).

### **III. Servant Song #3 / (Isaiah 50:4-11) The Servant will suffer for our sins.**

#### **A. Servant Song #3 / (Isaiah 50:4-11) The Servant will suffer for our sins.**

##### 1. Summary and introduction to the third Servant Song

“The first two of Isaiah's songs of the Servant placed emphasis on the ultimate success of Yahweh's Servant-Messiah. In Isaiah 42:1-9 Yahweh introduced His Servant and predicted the Servant's faithfulness in accomplishing His divinely appointed mission of bringing salvation and establishing a proper order on the whole earth. In the second song (Isa. 49:1-13), although a new feature of apparent initial failure by the Servant was introduced, His ultimate success was predicted not only in fulfilling an expanded mission to bring salvation to the Gentiles, but also in restoring Israel both to the land (physically and politically) and to Yahweh (spiritually).

The third Servant song (Isa. 50:4-11) amplifies the sufferings and patient endurance of the Servant, which were only hinted at in the previous songs. All of this is in preparation for the magnum opus of the fourth song (Isa. 52:13—53:12), in

which the Servant-Messiah's suffering and His consequent exaltation are revealed with equal emphasis. "Common to both [the third and fourth songs] is the new conception of the Servant as *sufferer*, here [50:4-9] at the hands of men, there [Isa. 53] at the hands of men and God alike." As in the previous songs, the Servant can be neither Isaiah himself (who nowhere else in the book is described as suffering) nor the nation Israel (whose humiliation and sufferings were neither voluntary nor [to anticipate Isa. 53] vicarious or substitutionary)."<sup>6</sup>

2. In short: The Lord gives His Servant over to abuse, but then vindicates Him. The Servant's disciples walk in the same obedience while judgment will come on the wicked.
3. (vs. 4a) The Lord has given to His Servant an instructed tongue so that He may know how to sustain others with the Lord's Word.
4. (vs. 4b) The Servant is a disciple of the Lord who is trained daily to obey His word.
  - a) Jesus would do the will of His Father (Luke 22:42).
  - b) He would learn submissively in His humanity (Luke 2:52).
  - c) In a sense, Jesus is the faithful son where Israel (and Adam) were faithless and disobedient. (Phil. 2:8)
5. (vs. 5-6) The Servant was in obedience inwardly and outwardly.
  - a) The Servant stands in a long line of persecuted prophets. (Mat. 22:37)

**(Mat 23:37-39 / ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!

<sup>38</sup> See, your house is left to you desolate.

<sup>39</sup> For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

- b) The picture here is that of Jesus scorned and beaten before being hung on a cross.
- c) This humiliation was reserved for criminals.

"Leupold claims that all the forms of ill-treatment mentioned in verse 6 were traditional ways of treating criminals

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<sup>6</sup> F. Duane Lindsey, "Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Commitment of the Servant in Isaiah 50:4-11," *Bibliotheca sacra* 139, no. 555 (1982): 216.

(cf. Num. 12:14; Deut. 25:9; Neh. 13:25; Matt. 26:67; 27:30). 'I offered my back to those who beat me' probably denotes in this context a public punishment, at least a beating or scourging by authorities (cf. Deut. 25:2-3; Jer. 20:2; 37:15). Pulling out the beard was a sign of contempt (Neh. 13:25), as were 'mocking and spitting' (Deut. 25:9; Num. 12:14; Job 30:10). Thus these sufferings are 'a startling anticipation [prophecy would be a more accurate term] of the maltreatment of Christ on the morning of the crucifixion.' While there is no indication in Isaiah 50 that the sufferings culminate in death, the prophecy prepares the way for the full details of Isaiah 53."<sup>7</sup>

6. (vs. 7-9) The Servant expresses His complete trust in the Lord despite the abuse He receives at the hands of others.
  - a) (vs. 8) This is a trial scene. Where is the adversary? The one who vindicates is near. Note the parallel to Zechariah 3:1-2.
  - b) The picture here is Christ enduring the beatings and shame of the cross. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

**(Heb 12:1-2 / ESV)**

- <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
- <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

7. (vs. 10-11) Those who trust in Lord and obey the voice of His Servant will be guided even in the darkness, while those who light their own paths will be destroyed.
  - a) There is a change of voice in the text from the Servant to the Lord.
  - b) The ones who follow the Servant may follow Him into the darkness ("Take up your cross daily and follow Me."), but they continue to trust in the Lord.
    - (1) The hope of Christ is for the future.
    - (2) We follow by faith (Hebrews 11).

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<sup>7</sup> F. Duane Lindsey, "Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Commitment of the Servant in Isaiah 50:4-11," *Bibliotheca sacra* 139, no. 555 (1982): 221-2.



## 8. Conclusion Servant Song #3

“The committed Servant-Disciple of Yahweh reports not only His past submission to the plan of Yahweh but also His voluntary sufferings at the hands of men, and implies that by His rejection He has learned to comfort the weary. In the wake of this rejection, He expresses confidence that Yahweh who has disciplined Him will also vindicate Him. Consequently Yahweh exhorts the Servant's disciples (following the Servant's example) to walk by faith in darkness, but threatens the unfaithful that their self-righteous efforts will end in judgment. The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in the sufferings and exaltation of Jesus Christ, and the response of the righteous and the wicked to Him.”<sup>8</sup>

### B. (Chapter 50) Context

1. (vs. 1-3) In a short trial speech, the Lord reiterates His love and concern for His people, Israel.
  - a) The speaker in these three verses is Yahweh, not the Servant, so they are not included in the Servant Song.
  - b) The reason for Israel's captivity in Babylon is their own sin
  - c) The issue is not that God had forgotten or rejected them.

“The other interpretation is this: the people are saying that it is God's fault that they are in captivity: God had arbitrarily rejected them and, at the same time, had been forced to give them up by his stronger competitors, who could make him 'pay up.' God tells them to produce the certificate of divorce, on which they will see that it was because of their rebellions that God had put away their mother, Zion. Furthermore, he calls them to show any creditor who could have forced him to sell them against his will. No, it is their fault (for your sins) that they have been put away and sold, not God's. One may argue that the two aspects of the question are not quite parallel (a certificate of divorce can be produced, and a list of creditors cannot), but the results are parallel. Evidence will show, either by its presence or its lack, that it is not the fault of God that they are in captivity. Thus the issue is not whether God is at fault for their situation; it is how can the

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<sup>8</sup> Lindsey, “Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Commitment of the Servant in Isaiah 50:4-11,” 227.

iniquities and rebellions that they have committed be atoned for so that they can return to him?”<sup>9</sup>

2. (vs. 4-9) Servant Song #3 / Suffering of the Servant of the Lord [**See above**]
3. (vs. 10-11) Those who fear the Lord and obey the word of His servant will trust in the Lord

C. (Chapter 51–52) Context

1. (51:1-8) Proclamation of the Lord’s salvation to the whole earth
  - a) (vs. 1) Listen you who pursue righteousness
  - b) (vs. 4) Listen Israel, the Lord will bring justice to the nations
  - c) (vs. 7) Listen you righteous—the Lord’s righteousness and salvation will last forever
2. (51:9-52:10) Awake, Awake
  - a) (51:9-16) Awake, awake—Lord who defeated the primeval forces
    - (1) (vs. 9-11) The cry of Zion
    - (2) (vs. 12-16) The Lord’s response

“Most scholars today are in agreement that while the exodus events are in the center of the writer’s thinking, they are not by any means all that is there. Rahab is clearly a term for Egypt (cf. 30:7; and Ps. 87:4, where Rahab and Babylon are paired); so also the monster (or ‘dragon’) is a term for Pharaoh (Ezek. 29:3). But it is also clear that those terms are not limited to those historical referents. As is known from Ugaritic studies, the twisting monster is a figure in the struggles of Baal with the god of the sea, Yam, as is ‘Leviathan,’ which is equated with the monster in Isa. 27:1. Given these facts, and the evidence that the myth of the struggle of the gods with the sea monster was known in one form or another all over the ancient Near East, one has reason to believe that Isaiah is here, as in 27:1, utilizing this acquaintance among the people for his own purposes. It is important to note that the allusions to Near Eastern myths in the Bible all occur after 750 B.C., long after the basic antimythical character of biblical faith had been established. Thus there is an appeal here neither to some current Hebrew myth nor to some original one, now dead. Rather, just as a contemporary poet might allude to the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, utilizing imagery familiar to his hearers but that is hardly part of their belief system, so Isaiah uses the imagery of the

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<sup>9</sup> John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 318.

well-known of creation to make his point. It was not Baal or Marduk or Ashur who had any claim to being the Creator—it was the Lord alone.”<sup>10</sup>

- b) (51:17-23) Awake, awake—Jerusalem from goblet of wrath
  - (1) (vs. 17-20) Israel has drunk of the cup of God’s wrath.
  - (2) (vs. 21-23) God will remove the cup from Israel and give it to her enemies (Babylon).
  - (3) Note Revelation 18:6
- c) (52:1-10) Awake, awake—Zion will know the Lord and His protection

“The point just made about myth being alluded to for literary purposes is confirmed in this verse. Where was it that God defeated the monster, *the great deep*? It was not in some primeval space and time, as in the myths; it was in the concrete time and space of Egypt in the 2nd millennium B.C. This makes it unmistakable that mythical imagery, not mythical thinking, is being used to express God’s sole lordship. The *sea* that threatened the divine plans was not preexistent material chaos, as in the myths; it was the Red Sea, which seemed to say that God was indeed not able to keep his promises to his people. Evil is not some primordial monster of the great deep, but that which in time and space threatens to frustrate the redemptive plan of God. This world is not a dreamlike reflection of what is taking place in the ‘real’ world of the gods. Creation and redemption involve *this* world, this time and space, and no other. Thus the great evidence of God’s absolute lordship is his ability to make a way for the redeemed to pass over the Red Sea. It is in time and space, our time and space, that God reveals himself.

The use of way is significant, because this and related terms, such as ‘highway,’ are used throughout the book to speak of God’s ability to bring his own back to him. Thus if that is what God did in the past for the descendants of Abraham, is it not possible that God could, if he would, do the same thing again?”<sup>11</sup>

- (1) (52:1-6) Jerusalem redeemed and restored
- (2) (52:7-12) Depart, Depart
  - (a) This is a hymn.
  - (b) Depart from captivity and touch no unclean thing
  - (c) But, it’s a leisurely departure because of the Lord’s presence

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<sup>10</sup> John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 341-42.

<sup>11</sup> Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66*, 342-43.

3. (52:13-15) is a preamble to the Song in chapter 53:1-12.

#### **IV. Servant Song #4 (Isaiah 52:13–53:12)**

##### **The Servant will provide substitutionary atonement for our sins.**

###### A. Introduction

“The fourth Servant song (Isa. 52:13—53:12) ‘may without any exaggeration be called the most important text of the Old Testament.’ This is confirmed first by its numerous citations in the New Testament (e.g., Luke 22:37; Acts 8:30-35; 1 Pet. 2:22-25), and second by the voluminous Jewish and Christian literature which has been based on this prophecy down through the centuries.”<sup>12</sup>

###### B. (vs. 52:13-15) Preamble—Exaltation of the Servant who would be degraded, but who would sprinkle the nations with His blood

1. (vs. 13) He will be lifted up and highly exalted (c.f. Phil. 2:8-11).
2. (vs. 14) His form will be marred beyond semblance.
3. (vs. 15) He will sprinkle the nations and shut the mouths of kings.

“In conclusion, that the Servant will ‘sprinkle many nations’ is a metonymy of cause (sprinkling) for effect (cleansing), here understood spiritually of His atoning work set forth in greater detail in chapter 53. The Servant will cleanse and purify for God's use those nations for whom His death is an expiatory satisfaction for sins. Unger related this cleansing more particularly to ‘millennial nations’ which the Servant-Messiah will ‘sprinkle expiatorily and cleanse for their role (as nations) in the Davidic-Messianic earthly Kingdom (2 Sam. 7:8-15).”<sup>13</sup>

###### C. (Chapter 53) Suffering Servant

1. Suffering of the Servant is highlighted, but the exaltation of the Servant is the focus.
2. (vs. 1) Who is the speaker? Perhaps it is repentant Jews.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> F. Duane Lindsey, “Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Career of the Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 139, no. 556 (1982): 312.

<sup>13</sup> Lindsey, “Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Call of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9,” 319.

<sup>14</sup> Lindsey, “Isaiah's Songs of the Servant: The Call of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9,” 320-21.

3. (vs. 2-3) He had no outward majesty of form to mark Him off.
4. (vs. 4-5) The Servant becomes a substitutionary atonement.
  - a) He carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him smitten by God.
  - b) He was wounded for our transgressions—He would be the substitutionary atonement for our sins.
  - c) His chastisement brought us peace.
  - d) By His stripes we are healed.
5. (vs. 6) We like sheep have gone astray—we have all sinned—and the Lord laid on the Servant the iniquity of us all.
6. (vs. 7) He was oppressed and afflicted. Like a lamb He was led to slaughter. Yet, He did not open His mouth—He went willingly to His death as a substitutionary sacrifice.
7. (vs. 8) Who considered that He would be cut off?
8. (vs. 9) They made His grave with the wicked, but also with a rich man.
  - a) He was crucified as a criminal between two thieves.
  - b) Yet, He was buried in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. (Mat. 27:57)
9. (vs. 10-11) The Lord has put Him to death as a guilt offering for mankind.
10. (vs. 12) God will give Him a portion among the many.

## V. (Chapter 54) Tender Mercies

“Chapters 54 and 55 are a lyrical announcement of salvation, and a call to participate in and rejoice in its reality. As many commentators have pointed out, there is little direct connection between 52:13-53:12 and these chapters. That is, there are few, if any, repetitions of that passage’s themes, and no direct references. Yet, if one omits that poem and tries to move directly from 52:12 to 54:1, the change of atmosphere is hard to explain. Even though 52:7-12 is somewhat more lyrical than 49:14-52:6, it is still continuing the tone of disputation and exhortation that characterizes that section as a whole. Israel is being called on to believe that it can be restored to God. In chs. 54 and 55 that is all changed. Israel is restored—in the mind of the writer, at least—and is called to bask in that reality.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66*, 413.

- A. The Lord treats His people according to His tender mercies, love, and promises.
1. (vs. 1-4) Israel as a barren woman is blessed with the abundance of children.
    - a) The Lord will multiply his people and their territory
    - b) The Lord will remove their shame and disgrace (of captivity)
  2. (vs. 5-10) Israel as a deserted wife will be restored.
    - a) Israel's "husband" is the Lord
    - b) He has forsaken her for a short time
    - c) He will restore His relationship with her because of His...

(1) Compassion ("tender mercies" רַחֵם)

"This root refers to deep love (usually of a 'superior' for an 'inferior') rooted in some 'natural' bond. In the Piel it is used for the deep inward feeling we know variously as compassion, pity, mercy. ...

This root is frequently used of God. It incorporates two concepts: first, the strong tie God has with those whom he has called as his children (Psa 103:13). God looks upon his own as a father looks upon his children; he has pity on them (cf. Mic 7:17). The second concept is that of God's unconditioned choice (hānēn, grace). God tells Moses that he is gracious and merciful to whomever he chooses (Exo 33:19).

There are several ideas attached to God's deep, tender love: first, the unconditional election of God (Exo 33:19); next, his mercy and forgiveness toward his people in the face of deserved judgment and upon the condition of their repentance (Deut 13:17 [H 18]); also, God's continuing mercy and grace in preserving his unrepentant people from judgment (2Kings 13:23) Thus this attribute becomes the basis in part of an eschatological hope (cf. Isa 14:1; Isa 49:13; Isa 54:7; Jer 12:15; Jer 33:26; Ezek 34:25; Mic 7:19; Zech 1:16).

...During the exile Israel's leaders encouraged the people with God's electing love and tender-mercy (Lam 3:32), and led them in humbling themselves in repentance, calling upon God to reinstate his father-like compassion (Zech 1:12). The restitution of the father-son relationship and the return from the exile witnesses this accompanying loving care (Hos 2:23 [H 25]). Scripture makes it certain that the exile was brought by God and terminated by God (Ezek 39:25) according to his sovereign providence (Isa 30:18; cf. E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 11, p. 353f.). Finally, the prophets' message regarding the return from the exile opens onto a permanent state where the father-son relationship will never be broken (Hos 2:23 [H 25]; Isa 54:8, 10)." [TWOT Hebrew Wordbook]<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> רַחֵם verb piel perfect 1st person common singular , suffix 2nd person feminine singular  
 2146.0 רַחַם (rāḥam) I, love deeply; have mercy, be compassionate. Denominative verb.  
 (2146a) רַחֵם (reḥem), רַחַם (raḥam) womb.  
 (2146b) רַחֲמִים (raḥāmîm) tender mercy.  
 (2146c) רַחֻם (raḥûm) compassionate.

(2) “Love” (“hesed” חֶסֶד)<sup>17</sup>

(3) “Covenant of peace” (=Davidic Covenant בְּרִית שְׁלוֹמִי)

d) In other words...God is motivated toward His people by His...

(1) Tender mercies

(2) Unconditional Love

(3) Promises

**(Rom 8:31-39 / ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

<sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

<sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

<sup>36</sup> As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

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(2146d) רַחֲמָנִי (rahāmānī) compassionate women (Lam 4:10)

<sup>17</sup> B3297 I. חֶסֶד n.m. goodness, kindness. I. *of man*: 1. *kindness* of men towards men, in doing favours and benefits; יהוה ח' *the kindness of* " (such as he shews); c. עַם; c. עֵל; c. ל'. 2. *kindness* (especially as extended to the lowly, needy and miserable), *mercy*. 3. (rarely) *affection* of Isr. to " , *love to God, piety*. 4. *lovely appearance*. II. *of God*: *kindness, lovingkindness* in condescending to the needs of his creatures. He is חֶסֶדָם *their goodness, favour*. 1. *specif. lovingkindness*: a. *in redemption from enemies and troubles*; men should trust in it; rejoice in it; hope in it. b. *in preservation of life from death*. c. *in quickening of spiritual life*. d. *in redemption from sin*. e. *in keeping the covenants*, with Abraham; with Moses and Israel; with David and his dynasty; with the wife Zion. 2. חֶסֶד is grouped with other divine attributes: חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה *kindness (lovingkindness) and fidelity*. 3. the *kindness* of God is a. *abundant*. b. *great in extant*; it is kept for thousands, esp. of those connected with lovers of " ; it is great as the heavens; the earth is full of it. c. *everlasting*. d. *good*. 4. pl. *mercies, deeds of kindness*, the historic displays of lovingkindness to Israel: shewn to Jacob; but mostly late; promised in the Davidic covenant; רַחֲמֵי חֶסֶד *mercies to David; mercies* in general; חֶסֶד in n.pr.m. בְּ-ח' v. sub בִּן. v. II. חֶסֶד sub II. חֶסֶד. (pg 338) [BDB]

- <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,  
<sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- B. (vs. 11-17) Jerusalem, as an afflicted city, will be rebuilt and established in righteousness.
1. The Lord will re-establish Jerusalem.
  2. Historically, this rebuilding came in the Persian Period.
  3. In the future, the passage refers to the ultimate exaltation of Jerusalem/Zion as the center of the Lord's kingdom

## VI. (Chapter 55) Come to the Lord.

- A. (vs. 1-5) Come to the Lord

1. Israel is now to receive all that is hers to have.
2. (vs. 1-2) The Lord's invitation is to those who cannot help themselves, but are willing to trust in Him for their salvation.

- a) John 7:37

**(John 7:37 / ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

- b) Revelation 22:17

**(Rev 22:17 / ESV)**

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. (vs. 3-5) This salvation comes through the Davidic Prince—Jesus, the Messiah

3. (vs. 3-5) The coming of the Davidic Messiah to rule

- B. (vs. 6-11) Seek the Lord when He may be found.

1. C.f. Romans 9–11 and the remnant/restoration of Israel in the future
2. (vs. 8-9) His ways are higher and inscrutable.
3. (vs. 10-11) His Word will not return empty.



C. (vs. 12-13) Restoration of the entire earth

1. This restoration happens under the Messiah in the millennial kingdom.
2. The earth will sign praises to the Lord because His glory fills the earth—His macro-temple.

**Conclusion:**

If we hold a tripartite structure to Isaiah, these chapters represent the end of the second major section of the book (1-39; 40-55; 56-66). They are set during the period of the Babylonian Captivity—even though from Isaiah’s perspective, these events are yet 150 years in the future.

A number of themes appear in chapters 40-55, which begin with a call to “comfort” God’s people Israel, who find themselves captives in Babylon. The prophecies are reassuring in that they predict the Lord’s deliverance, but at the same time, the Lord makes it abundantly clear that Israel has caused her own distress through her sins of rebellion and idolatry. As punishment for that idolatry, the Lord has removed Israel from the land and allowed her to be brought to the very center of idolatry, Babylon.

Throughout these chapters the Lord demonstrates His superiority over all the false gods/idols. He displays His power and omniscience by predicting the future and then bringing these events to pass.

At the core of these prophecies is the deliverance or salvation of His people. Historically, this deliverance would come through Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, who conquered Babylon (538 B.C.) and issued a decree to allow the Jews to return to their land (536 B.C.).

Salvation in the future will come through the “Servant” Messiah who offers himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of Israel as well as the entire world. The four “Servant Songs” all paint a picture of the coming Messiah, Jesus, who as a faithful Servant will become the substitutionary atonement for the sins of Israel, and for the entire earth. He will one day rule on the Davidic throne and all the earth will rejoice in His future reign.

Chapters 54-55, standing at the end of this second section of Isaiah, focus on the restoration of Israel and the salvation of the world through the Messiah. The overarching theme is the tender mercies of the Lord—His love for His people and His love for the world. By those tender mercies, the Lord heals Israel and beckons all who are thirsty to come to Him.