

Isaiah 49

This is a great Messianic chapter, along with the following chapter, Isaiah 50. In verses 1-13 of Isaiah 49, the Messiah, *the Servant*, is encouraged after viewing the ministry to which He had been *called* as less than effective (v.4). In verses 14-26, *Zion* (Jerusalem) is encouraged after viewing herself as *forsaken* and *forgotten* (v.14).

Keep in mind that Isaiah 49 is the first chapter of the section of Isaiah titled, “*That her iniquity has been removed,*” a section that begins with Isaiah 49:1 and ends with Isaiah 57:21 (read the notes associated with Isaiah 40:2 for more input). As we cover this section, you will note the transition from *Cyrus*, the main subject of the previous section (Isaiah 40:12-48:22), to *the Servant* that we know to be Jesus Christ. What *the Servant* (Jesus) would accomplish through His suffering for the Jews and Gentiles alike is also addressed in this section. The restoration of *Zion* (Jerusalem) and its people is covered as well, along with other pertinent information relating to the Messianic Kingdom.

Is. 49:1 Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me.

The “*Me*” of this verse is the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ the Servant, the same “*Me*” as is addressed in Isaiah 48:16. He is the speaker in verses 1-4 and calls the *peoples from afar*, the Gentiles, to listen to His words. These Gentile nations should be encouraged by what is addressed in this chapter; for the Servant will make salvation available, not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well (we will discuss this in more depth when we study Isaiah 49:6). It is the Servant’s death, which we will study in detail in Isaiah 53, that makes this possible.

Jehovah *called* the Servant *from the womb* of His *mother*, calling Him to a specific vocation and purpose—that of filling the office of Messiah. Therefore, He was not *called* to salvation (He had no need to be saved since He has always been the eternal Son), but was *called* as Messiah. This confirms that the word “*called*” in Scripture does not have to mean that God calls certain individuals to salvation and forget the rest, never allowing them opportunity to believe. No other being could function as Messiah, for it took a sinless God-man to die for the sin of sinful mankind. Consequently, function was the issue with the Servant’s calling rather than selection.

Note that the Servant’s *mother* is mentioned without mention of an earthly father. In fact, no place in Scripture indicates that Jesus was born of an earthly father. Therefore, Joseph’s lineage is recorded in Matthew 1:1-16 to prove that had Jesus been Joseph’s son He could not be Messiah (*Jeconiah*, addressed in Matthew 1:11, who is also *Coniah*, was prohibited from having a single descendant prosper on the throne of David—Jeremiah 22:24-30). Therefore, if Jesus is Joseph’s son, we have no Savior. Consider the following information as it relates to Jesus’ ancestry.

Had Jesus been Joseph’s son, He would have descended from Adam and, therefore, possessed an Adamic nature—the very thing which separates unredeemed mankind from God (Ephesians 2:3). Clearly, it was a necessity that He be born of a *virgin* (Isaiah 7:14), *the woman* of Genesis 3:15, and that the heavenly Father be His Daddy. It is for this reason that Isaiah 49:1 states, “*The Lord called me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me.*” Jesus was *called* (as Messiah—not for salvation) *from the womb* and was *named* before birth (Isaiah 49:1), as is confirmed by Matthew 1:18-23 and Luke 1:26-33. Again we see that function (vocation, office) was the issue with the Servant’s calling rather than selection.

A similar thing occurred with Jeremiah, who was *appointed as a prophet* even before he was *formed...in the womb* (Jeremiah 1:5). Jeremiah was not called to salvation but rather to the office of *prophet* to the southern kingdom of Judah, having the freedom to choose or reject obedience to Jehovah once he was born. God, however, due to His foreknowledge, realized before Jeremiah’s birth that he would choose to obey. Thus, God knew what He was doing in calling him beforehand to this very strategic office. The same general principle applies to *John* the Baptist’s calling as a *forerunner* of Christ’s First Coming (read Luke 1:8-17).

Is. 49:2 And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me, And He has also made Me a select arrow; He has hidden Me in His quiver.

There is no doubt that God the Father energized the Son’s words by making His *mouth like a sharp sword*. A quick glance at Matthew 7:29 confirms that Jesus, the God-man, spoke with an *authority* unmatched by man. We see Him use this same *authority* to pronounce judgment on the Jewish *leaders* shortly before He is arrested, beaten, and crucified (read Matthew 23:13-39). His words were piercing as the Father expressed Himself through the Son. It is interesting too that Jesus will *smite the nations* at His Second Coming by means of the *sharp sword* coming forth from His *mouth* (Revelation 19:15). Oh the consistency of God’s word!

The Father not only energized the Son’s words, but He also protected Him from harm by concealing Him *In the shadow of His hand*. This is observed on different occasions in the Gospels, such as in John 7:30 and John 8:20; for Jesus repeatedly fled from danger before finally allowing Himself to be arrested and crucified. The Father also made Jesus *a select arrow* and hid Him *in His quiver*, meaning that the Son, the Servant, was available and ready for service whenever the Father beckoned.

It is interesting that the phrase, “*He has also made me a select arrow*” (NASB), is rendered, “*He*

has made me a choice (eklekton) arrow,” in the Septuagint (the translation of the Old Testament Hebrew text into Greek in the third century BC)—pointing to the Servant’s chosenness and validating what we discovered in Isaiah 42:1. Obviously, the Servant was not chosen for salvation but rather to be Messiah. Therefore, the word “*chosen*” in Scripture does not point to individuals being selected for salvation, but rather makes reference to their appointment to a vocation (office), determined by God, that can either be accepted or rejected. This is confirmed in John 6:70-71; for *Judas*, being *chosen* as an apostle along with the other eleven, was never spiritually redeemed (also read John 17:12).

Is. 49:3 And He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory."

Note that the *Servant* is called *Israel* in this instance. But who is the *Servant*? Is it the nation of *Israel*; for on occasion in the Scriptures, the Hebrew people have been referenced as God’s *servant* (read Isaiah 44:1-2 for example)? Based on Isaiah 49:5-6, a distinction is made between the *Servant* (who is the Messiah), and the *servant* (the nation of Israel). Therefore, the *Servant* in Isaiah 49:3 is the Messiah who is called “*Israel*.”

The *Servant*, Jesus, is called “*Israel*” in Isaiah 49:3 because He succeeded at that which the Jews (the nation of Israel) failed to trust God to carry out. The Jews were to take to the Gentiles the good news given them by the Father. Instead, they sat on it and viewed themselves as superior to the Gentiles, not wanting to dirty themselves by associating with non-Jewish blood. In Isaiah 49:6, we will find that the Messiah is *a light*, not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles (*nations*) as well. Therefore, Jesus is called “*Israel*” in Isaiah 49:3 because the Father accomplished through the Son what He originally desired to accomplish through *Israel* as a nation. Also consider that “*Israel*” means, “prince with God,” Jesus being the “*Prince of Peace*” according to Isaiah 9:6.

Oh, the price the Hebrew people have paid for their lack of concern for the Gentiles! Instead of the Gentiles serving and honoring the Jews, which would have been the case had the Jews obeyed, the Jews have consistently served (and been in bondage to) the Gentiles. This will continue “*until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*” (Luke 21:24) at the end of the Tribulation.

The last phrase of Isaiah 49:3 states, “*In Whom I will show My glory.*” This phrase is interpreted, “*in whom I will be glorified*” in the American Standard Version. Most definitely, the Father’s *glory* was displayed through the *Servant*, Jesus, at His First Coming (read John 12:28, John 13:31-32, John 17:1, and John 21:19). It is currently being displayed through all believers during the Church age (Ephesians 1:12; Colossians 1:27) and will be present throughout the Millennium (Ezekiel 43:1-2)—as well as the Eternal Order (Revelation 21:23).

Is. 49:4 But I said, "I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the Lord, And My reward with My God."

Jesus, at least for a brief span of time, had doubts as to the effectiveness of the ministry to which He had been called. He viewed Himself as having *toiled in vain*, spending His *strength for nothing and vanity* due to Israel’s rejection of His message. This prayer to the Father was stated during a very difficult season, possibly at Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). These doubts were momentary, for He followed with statements of confidence pertaining to the Father’s ability to see Him through. Even though He had experienced rejection at the hands of His own people, He still trusted the Father to use His circumstances as a major player in the Father’s overall plan (read the last half of Isaiah 49:4). Oh, what a plan would unfold, a plan that we will examine in verses 5-13!

It is remarkable that the Servant has the openness to discuss His brief season of doubt. Were this

account for the purpose of deceiving the reader into believing in a hoax (or false religious system), it certainly would not include such delicate information. This confirms that the Servant, who is the God-man that we know to be Jesus, is honest with us concerning the pain and disappointment He experienced while on earth. If He *lives in* us (Galatians 2:20), and we possess His *mind* (1Corinthians 2:16), we too should be free to share, when appropriate, the disappointments we experience along the way.