

You Are My Servant Isa. 41:8-9

Introduction:

1. The language of Scripture is often profound, pregnant with meaning and prophetic in nature.
2. Such is the case with the so-called Servant Songs of Isaiah.
3. Even a casual consideration reveals that God perceives of Israel as His servant, but further thought focuses our attention upon Jesus as the Servant of God, and as I meditate further I realize that it is God's intent that I see myself as the servant of God. It is both a blessing and a challenging realization.
4. What I would like to do in this lesson is survey these passages from Isaiah, make some observations about them and challenge you to be the servant that God wants you to be.

Discussion:

I. Isa. 41:8-9 is the first mention in Isaiah of Israel as the servant of God. (It is not considered one of the Servant Songs. These are: 1) Isa. 42; 2) Isa. 49; 3) Isa. 50; 4) Isa. 52 and 53. Some consider 61:1-3 as an additional servant song, but we will not consider it here. The word "servant" is not mentioned in that passage.)

- A. It is very clear in this passage that Israel is considered as God's servant.
 1. They are the descendants of Jacob and Abraham.
 2. Note that it is a nationalistic consideration. While the language is in the singular: "My servant," nevertheless it is obviously referring to the nation. The focus is not on one single individual as the chosen of God, but upon the descendants of Jacob and Abraham.
- B. God has chosen them.
 1. They did not choose to be God's servant, but God chose them.
 2. This may raise the question of election for us, but the theological implications of God choosing Israel are not addressed in this text. The text merely says that God chose them.
 3. This is a prominent theme throughout the O.T. (Deut. 7:6-7; 14:2; Amos 3:2).
 4. To reiterate this point in Isaiah is to remind the people that even though they may endure Babylonian captivity as a result of being imperfect servants they are still the chosen people of God (note 41:10-16).
 5. Isa. 43:8-13 reiterates this same point. Israel is God's witness that He is God, that He is powerful and that He is both judge of the wicked and deliverer of His chosen (43:1ff). 41:10ff presents God in this same light. He is their strength (10ff). He is their provider (17ff). He is not limited by time (21-24). He rules over rulers (25).

II. Isa. 42:1-25.

- A. Out of this context and into chapter 42 you would expect God's servant to continue to be Israel.

1. He continues to refer to His chosen one (1).
 2. He continues to reiterate His care over them (6-9).
 3. I would contend that it does indeed refer to Israel.
- B. But N.T. students are reminded of what Matthew says in 12:15-21. He makes it refer to Jesus.
1. Evidence that that passage certainly is Messianic is suggested by God's Spirit being upon Him and His bringing forth justice to the nations (Cf. Isa. 2:2-4).
 2. Such is the nature of Messianic rule. The Messiah brings light to the nations and opens the eyes of the blind (cf. 41:6-7). Cf. Matt. 11:4-5; Isa. 35:5. Note Isa. 61:1ff and Lk. 4:18-19.
- C. Tension is created with "My servant" being the Messiah in 42:18ff. Is the Messiah blind and deaf? Certainly not, but Israel is (42:23ff).

III. Isa. 49:1ff would seem to refer to the nation of Israel as the Servant of God.

- A. Verse 3 specifically says, "You are My servant, Israel."
- B. But Simeon in Lk. 2:25-32 applies it to Jesus and Luke records it from the same perspective trying to convince us that Jesus is the Messianic Servant.
- C. Paul, in Acts 14:47 reasons from this passage to turn to the Gentiles in his preaching at Pisidian Antioch. He regards himself as executing the Messianic mission of the Servant of God. Does he see himself as servant of God???

IV. Isa. 50:4ff again speaks of God's servant. He is the one who calls people to the Lord.

- A. Is the servant the nation of Israel? It is hard to see the nation calling people to the Lord when they are the object of the call.
- B. Perhaps it is Isaiah himself. Certainly his message is a call to the Lord. Or perhaps it is all the faithful in Israel who would call the disobedient to repentance.
- C. Or is this passage a reference to the Messiah who calls people to the Lord?
 1. The famous OT commentator E. J. Young states, "It is difficult to understand how the servant can be the nation Israel or the best part thereof; but there is no difficulty if the servant is that unique individual who stands in unparalleled relationship to God, the Head of the church, the suffering Savior" (*Book of Isaiah*, vol. 3, Isa. 40:10, p. 303).
 2. Whoever the servant is the passage indicates that God has not abandoned His people and that through His servant He helps them.
 3. Would you be the servant of God in helping His people?

V. Isa. 52 and 53.

- A. One can hardly read Isa. 52 without seeing Israel as God's servant.
 1. Oppressed in Egypt.
 2. Oppressed by Assyria.
 3. Now oppressed by Babylon.
 4. But God is their deliverer. His servant will prosper. He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

- B. And yet, the language is so fitting of the Messiah (cf. 13-15).
 - 1. Was He not lifted up after being marred (cf. Phil. 2:7ff)?
 - 2. And don't stop reading at the end of chapter 52.
- C. Chapter 53 seems especially fitting of the Messiah.
 - 1. Paul uses it in Rom. 10:16 and applies it to the message of Christ.
 - 2. A comparison with the gospel accounts seems to make what Jesus experienced parallel with this text.
 - a. He was forsaken.
 - b. Opened not his mouth.
 - c. Died.
 - d. Buried in a rich man's tomb.
 - e. The N.T. reveals that He died in payment for the penalty of our sins and that He bore our sins.
 - 3. No doubt Jesus is the Servant of God, but Israel was too. She was an imperfect servant, but a servant nevertheless. Perhaps we should not be so rigid in our attempts to distinguish one from the other.

VI. Perhaps we should not be so concerned to distinguish ourselves from the Servant of God.

- A. Paul seems to have lost himself in Christ (Gal. 2:20).
- B. Can you allow yourself to be God's Servant? I am not asking you to be under the delusion that you are the Messiah, but that you identify yourself with Him so thoroughly that you act like Him in service to God.
 - 1. Can you be despised and forsaken of men as God's servant?
 - 2. Can you bear the griefs, sorrows and pains of others as God's servant?
 - 3. Can you be pierced through for the transgressions of others in service to God?
 - 4. Can you remain silent when oppressed and afflicted?
 - 5. Can you give your life up as God's servant?
- C. Do you realize that being "Servant of God" is not a disdainful thing? It is an honor to be so associated with God?

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you the Servant of God?
- 2. It is a high calling.
- 3. Is it one that you are chosen for?