

Isaiah 49 - The Servant, the Light of the Gentiles; God Will Remember Zion

III. Prophecies of comfort (Is 40:1—66:24)

(2) Israel's deliverer (Is 49:1—57:21)

(A) Servant's task (49:1-26)

(a) Calling (49:1-3)

(b) Concern (49:4)

(c) Ministry to the Gentiles (49:6b-7)

(d) Ministry to Israel (49:5-6a,8-26)

The Servant Songs of the Messiah (Is 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13—53:12)

These four passages present as complete a picture of the Messiah as you'll find anywhere in Scripture, Old Testament or New.

Isaiah 49

(2) Israel's deliverer (Is 49:1—57:21)

(A) Servant's task (49:1-26)

(a) Calling (49:1-3)

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

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.

1 "Listen to me, you coastlands! Pay attention, you people from far away! The LORD called me from the womb; while I was still in my mother's body, he pronounced my name.

1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

2 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 sharpened arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver.

2 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.

2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword; he hid me in the shadow of his hands. He made me like a polished arrow and hid me away in his quivers.

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;
- "...mouth like a sharp sword" - the sword of the Spirit (Cf. Heb 4:12, Hosea 6:5; Rev 1:16; 2:16; 19:15)

3 He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, In whom I will show My glory."
3 He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory."
3 He said to me: 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will glorify myself.'
3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

(b) Concern (49:4)

4 But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and futility; Nevertheless, the justice *due* to Me is with the LORD, And My reward is with My God."
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."
4 "I said: 'I've labored for nothing. I've exhausted my strength on futility and on emptiness.' Yet surely my recompense is with the LORD, and my reward is with my God."
4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

(d) Ministry to Israel (49:5-6a,8-26)

5 And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength),
5 And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength),
5 "And now, says the LORD, who formed you from the womb as his servant to bring Jacob back to him so that Israel might be gathered to him— and I am honored in the LORD's sight and my God has been my help—
5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

(c) Ministry to the Gentiles (49:6b-7)

6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the protected ones of Israel; I will also make You a **light of the nations** So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Israel and bring back those of Jacob I have preserved. I'll also make you as a light to the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

- "...light to the nations" - the calling of the Messiah is not only on behalf of Israel to regather the scattered nation, but also to be the light and the salvation to the nations (Gentiles)

— Passages related to Gentiles in the Kingdom include: Is 11:10; 14:1-2; 42:1; 56:1-8; 66:18-24

- Is 49:1,6 were very influential for one set of parents: "he was called from the womb with a destiny, given as a light to the nations." So they named him, "Christ bearer," Christopher Columbus.

Gentile Salvation

In Rom 11:11-15, Paul builds upon Is 49:1-13 where Isaiah taught that the Messiah would come to Israel; Israel would reject Him, and the Messiah would then, for awhile, become the light to the Gentiles. But eventually, Israel will return to Him and be restored.

Paul did not say anything new in Romans; he just points out the way Isaiah 49 is being fulfilled to this day. In Rom 11:1-10, Paul taught that there is still a Remnant coming to saving faith. In Rom 11:11-15, he states that the primary way Jews now come to faith is by being provoked to jealousy by Gentile believers.

7 This is what the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel *and* its Holy One, Says to the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers: "Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You."

7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel *and* its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, "Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You."

7 "This is what my Lord says— the LORD your Redeemer, O Israel, and his Holy One— to one despised by people, to those abhorred as a nation, to the servant of rulers: Kings see and arise, and princes will bow down, because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, the one who has chosen you."

7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

- At the time of the final restoration of Israel, the Messiah will be manifested in the most complete sense as the light to the Gentiles, and all the kings of the Gentiles will worship Him

- The rejection of Christ by Israel meant that the gospel went to the ends of the earth

(d) Ministry to Israel (49:5-6a,8-26)

8 This is what the LORD says: "At a favorable time I answered You, And on a day of salvation I helped You; And I will watch over You and make You a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to give as inheritances the deserted hereditary lands;

8 Thus says the LORD, "In a favorable time I have answered You, And in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to make *them* inherit the desolate heritages;

8 "This what the LORD says: "I'll answer you in a time of favor, and on a day of salvation I'll help you. I have watched over you, and given you as a covenant for the people, to restore the land, to reassign the inheritances that have been devastated;

8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 Saying to those who are bound, 'Go free,' To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' They will feed along the roads, And their pasture *will be* on all bare heights.

9 Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,' To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' Along the roads they will feed, And their pasture *will be* on all bare heights.

9 saying to captives, 'Come out!' and to those who are in darkness, 'Be free!' "They will feed on all the mountains, and their pasture will be on all the barren hills.

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

10 "They will not hunger or thirst, Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has compassion on them will lead them, And He will guide them to springs of water.

10 "They will not hunger or thirst, Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has compassion on them will lead them And will guide them to springs of water.

10 They won't hunger or thirst, nor will the desert heat or sun beat upon them; for the one who has compassion on them will drive them and guide them alongside springs of water.

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

11 "I will make all My mountains a road, And My highways will be raised up.

11 "I will make all My mountains a road, And My highways will be raised up.

11 I'll turn all my mountains into a road, and my highways will be raised up.

11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

12 "Behold, these will come from afar; And behold, these *will come* from the north and from the west, And these from the land of Aswan."

12 "Behold, these will come from afar; And lo, these *will come* from the north and from the west, And these from the land of Sinim."

12 "Watch! They'll come from far away— some from the north and from the west, and others from the Aswan region."

12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of **Sinim**.

- This dispersion is worldwide; here, there is no talk of a return from Babylonian exile

— It is rather a regathering of the children of God that are scattered to the four corners of the earth!

- "...Sinim" [KJV] - a reference to China? (see note below)

-- The Chinese will receive the Redeemer of Israel (Is 49:6-7; 60:3,5)

-- The Chinese will come from the east and sit down in Christ's coming Kingdom (Luke 13:29)

-- The Chinese will come to Christ in the end times (Luke 13:30; John 1:29)

Sinim

The label Sinim derives from Ch'in, the feudal state in China, 897-221 BC, which unified China in the 3rd century BC, and built the Great Wall. The Ch'in boundaries have always embraced the indivisible area of China proper. It is from this dynasty that the name China is derived. In the Chinese Bible, the other name for "Sinim" is "Qin Guo" (秦国)

During Isaiah's time, China was not one unified country yet. At that time, under the Zhuo dynasty, China was made up of hundreds of states, whereby the state of Qin was only one of them. It was later on that the state of Qin emerged as one of the 14 major states. It was not until almost 500 years after Isaiah that the Qin dynasty was established, and the name Qin represented the Middle Kingdom, China.

Exegetical Experts Agree

- Edward J. Young, Ph.D., *The Book of Isaiah*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972, volume 3, p. 282
- Means "plural of Sinim, a distant Oriental region." Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (#5515, p. 82),
- Brown, Driver and Briggs identify Sinim "with the inhabitants of Southern China" (note on Is 49:12).
- Heinrich Gesenius (1786-1842), in his *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* (1821); (Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*, Baker Book House, 1990 reprint, pp. 584-585).
- Dr. John Gill (1697-1771) pointed out that Manasseh ben Israel (1604-1657), a Hebrew scholar, identified Sinim as China, as did Ptolemy (c. 90-168 AD), an Egyptian scientist and geographer (John Gill, D.D., *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989 reprint, volume I, p. 289; note on Is 49:12).

13 Shout for joy, you heavens! And rejoice, you earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people And will have compassion on His afflicted.

13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people And will have compassion on His afflicted.

13 Shout with joy, you heavens, and rock with glee, you earth! Break out in song, you mountains! The LORD is comforting his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

The Consolation of Zion (49:14-26)

Zion Not Forsaken

14 But Zion said, "The LORD has abandoned me, And the Lord has forgotten me."

14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me."

14 "But Zion said, 'The LORD has abandoned me, and my God has forgotten me.'

14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or have no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these mothers may forget; But as for me, I'll never forget you!

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

16 "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of *My hands*; Your walls are continually before Me.

16 "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of *My hands*; Your walls are continually before Me.

16 Look! I've inscribed you on the palms of my hands, and your walls are forever before me.

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

- Listen to what He says right after the prophecy of China in the book of Isaiah: God has not forgotten Israel! God has a destiny for Israel.

17 "Your builders hurry; Your destroyers and devastators Will leave you.

17 "Your builders hurry; Your destroyers and devastators Will depart from you.

17 Your builders are working faster than your destroyers, and those who devastated you go away from you.

17 Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

18 "Raise your eyes and look around; All of them gather together, they come to you. As I live," declares the LORD, "You will certainly put them all on as jewelry and bind them on as a bride.

18 "Lift up your eyes and look around; All of them gather together, they come to you. As I live," declares the LORD, "You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.

18 Lift up your eyes and look around— they have all gathered together and are coming to you. "As surely as I live," says the LORD, "you will clothe yourself with all of them like ornaments, and tie them on like a bride.

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

The Waste Places Shall be Restored

19 "For your ruins and deserted places and your destroyed land— Now you will certainly be **too cramped for the inhabitants**, And those who swallowed you will be far away.

19 "For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land— Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants, And those who swallowed you will be far away.

19 Indeed, your ruins, your desolate places, and your devastated land will now be too crowded for your inhabitants, while those who swallowed you up will be far away.

19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

- "...too cramped for the inhabitants" - Gen 15:18

— The land given to Abraham should go to the West Bank of the River Euphrates (not the Jordan)!

20 "The children you lost will yet say in your ears, 'The place is too cramped for me; Make room for me that I may live *here*.'

20 "The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears, 'The place is too cramped for me; Make room for me that I may live *here*.'

20 "The children who are grieving at present will yet say in your hearing, 'This place is too crowded for me; make room for me, so I may have a place to live.'

20 The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

21 "Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has fathered these for me, Since I have been bereaved of my children And cannot conceive, *and I am* an exile, and a wanderer? And who has raised these? Behold, I was left alone; Where are these from?'"

21 "Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, Since I have been bereaved of my children And am barren, an exile and a wanderer? And who has reared these? Behold, I was left alone; From where did these come?'"

21 Then you'll ask in your heart, 'Who bore these children for me, although I was childless and barren, and an exile and cast aside? Who brought these up? Look! For my part I was left all alone; but as for these, where have they come from?'

21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?

As the Jews return to the Land in a seemingly endless stream, they'll be surprised at their own numbers. After 2000 years of relentless persecution the size of their population will far surpass their expectations. The true extent of the Lord's providence will be seen in their

preservation. And though since 1948 they've heard the world constantly demanding that they get smaller, they'll realize that instead, they'll need to get bigger. Ezekiel's prophecy says that Israel in the Kingdom Age will extend from 100 miles north of Damascus to 100 miles south of Jerusalem, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, so it'll will be more than sufficient to their needs.

The Gentiles and the Return of Israel

22 This is what the Lord GOD says: "Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations And set up My flag to the peoples; And they will bring your sons in their arms, And your daughters will be carried on *their* shoulders.

22 Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations And set up My standard to the peoples; And they will bring your sons in *their* bosom, And your daughters will be carried on *their* shoulders.

22 "For this what the LORD says, 'Watch! I'll lift up my hand to the nations and raise my banner to the nations. They will bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.'

22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

- The Jews will become the center of Gentile attention during Israel's final restoration (the Messianic Kingdom)

- This was promised by Moses (Deut 15:6) as a reward for their obedience (Deut 28:1,13). Such reward awaits Israel's national regeneration.

- The final regathering will be with the assistance of Gentiles (Cf. Is 61:6-7; see note Center of Gentile Attention in Ezek 37:23).

- The reason Israel will become the center of Gentile attention is due to the fact that the Shekinah Glory will abide over Israel (Is 60:1-3).

23 "Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the ground And lick the dust from your feet; And you will know that I am the LORD; Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.

23 "Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth And lick the dust of your feet; And *you* will know that I am the LORD; Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.

23 "Oh, yes! Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens will be your nursing mothers. They will bow to you with their faces to the ground, and lick the dust from your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

- At the final regathering, the Gentiles of every social stratum will become servants of Israel, and Israel will never again be shamed by them

— When the regathering takes place, Israel will rebuild all the desolate cities of the Land. At that time, the Gentiles will become servants to Israel, and will feed the flocks and plow the fields.

A major characteristic of Israel's final restoration (in the Messianic Kingdom) is that they will become the center of Gentile attention. This is described in various passages: Is 14:1-2; 49:22-23; 60-1-3; 61:4-9; Micah 7:14-17; Zeph 3:20; Zech 8:23; Cf. The Center of Gentile Attention in Ezek 37:23.

The Judgment of the Gentiles

24 "Can the prey be taken from a mighty man, Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?"

24 "Can the prey be taken from the mighty man, Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?"

24 "Can they seize plunder from warriors, or can the captives of tyrants be rescued?

24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?

25 Indeed, this is what the LORD says: "Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away, And the prey of a tyrant will be rescued; For I will contend with the one who contends with you, And I will save your sons.

25 Surely, thus says the LORD, "Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away, And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued; For I will contend with the one who contends with you, And I will save your sons.

25 But this is what the LORD says:

"He will seize even the warriors' plunder, and the captives of tyrants will be rescued. I myself will quarrel with those who have a quarrel with you, and I myself will save your children.

25 But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

26 "I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; And humanity will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

26 "I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; And all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

26 "I'll make those who mistreat you eat their own flesh, and they will get drunk on their own blood, as with new wine. "Then all mankind will know that I am the LORD your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

Israel's wealth will be restored, all their captives set free. The Lord will personally see to it. The ill-gotten gains of their enemies will be taken to the point of leaving them completely destitute, and they'll finally realize that the Lord sees fighting against Israel as fighting against Him.