

God Foretells of Redemption

This is an elaborate undertaking, Sebastian,” said Douglas, as the two men walked around scaffolding. “Couldn’t you just hold a prayer meeting in a room somewhere?”

Sebastian gave his guest a patient smile. He was giving Douglas a tour of the facility in hopes of him taking over for one of the crew managers who had to leave the project suddenly because of illness in his family.

Sebastian was building the facility headquarters that would house “Boundless Love for All Humanity.” It was a ministry to the homeless in the city of Philadelphia. Its mission was to bring God’s light to a dark place through sharing the Gospel; offering education, job skills, and career opportunities; and assisting with financial independence.

Sebastian had prayed, planned, and prepared for this ministry for the past 15 years. Monies had come from grants and financial backers. The momentum and means had come from like-minded supporters, but the mission had come from God.

“I am excited to be part of this undertaking—which is the Lord’s,” Sebastian said to his guest. “He wants to show the light of His love and support to those who many seem to have forgotten or have forsaken.”

“If you will excuse me,” Sebastian said, looking at his cell phone, “It’s almost time for our lunch and devotion.”

“Could I stay?” Douglas asked.

“I’d be so happy if you did,” Sebastian said, his smile growing wider. “Right this way.”

1. *What benefits does light provide?*

2. *What things can prevent light from serving its intended purpose?*

3. *How does God’s light affect our lives?*

LESSON FOCUS: Take heart! God sent His servant as a light for all people.

Called from the Womb

Isaiah 49:1-4, KJV

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 men-
tion of my name.

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;

3 And said unto me, Thou
art my servant, O Israel, in
whom I will be glorified.

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.

Isaiah 49:1-4, NIV

¹Listen to me, you islands;
hear this, you distant nations:
Before I was born the LORD called
me;

from my mother's womb he has
spoken my name.

²He made my mouth like a
sharpened sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid
me;

he made me into a polished arrow
and concealed me in his
quiver.

³He said to me, "You are my
servant,
Israel, in whom I will display my
splendor."

⁴But I said, "I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for
nothing at all.

Yet what is due me is in the
LORD's hand,
and my reward is with my God."

Jews typically interpret Isaiah's Servant Songs (in Isa. 42, 49, 50, and 53) as the servant represents the nation of Israel. However, when the songs are quoted in the New Testament, the writers interpret the Servant as the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who calls to all nations.

The mouth of the Messiah would be like a sharpened sword, delivering teaching that could cut to the core of His listeners' hearts, and reveal their innermost secrets. He is using this sword to appeal to the nations to acknowledge God's sovereignty over them. There is also this hint of hiddenness to the Messiah, in that He represented a mystery to be revealed at a later time. Now, God hides

Him in the shadow of His hand, and conceals Him as an arrow in a quiver. The Servant wonders, out loud, about the refusal of someone to acknowledge that He has come from God. Centuries later, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem because the Messiah had remained hidden from them (Luke 19:41-44).

Even so, the Messiah was confident that the Lord would reward Him for His work, even if many rejected it.

4. *Who called and equipped the Servant to His ministry?*

5. *What did the Servant expect from God?*

A Light to the Gentiles

Isaiah 49:5-7, KJV

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.

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.

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

Isaiah 49:5-7, NIV

⁵And now the LORD says—
he who formed me in the womb
to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel to himself,
for I am honored in the eyes of
the LORD
and my God has been my
strength—

⁶he says:

“It is too small a thing for you
to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I
have kept.

I will also make you a light for
the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to
the ends of the earth.”

⁷This is what the LORD says—
the Redeemer and Holy One
of Israel—
to him who was despised and
abhorred by the nation,

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.

to the servant of rulers:
 “Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

The Messiah’s first order of business was to bring the people of Israel back to God. The return from exile would be a symbolic manifestation of God’s people turning their hearts to Him, and trusting in His Messiah.

Jesus’ outreach to the Gentiles is reflected in the instructions to the Servant. Not only would He restore the heart of Jacob’s tribes to God, but He would also extend His hand of compassion and salvation to non-Jews—all over the world—and the rulers of other nations would honor the One who His own people rejected.

6. *Why would the Servant’s realm extend beyond Israel to the nations?*

7. *Why would the Servant have credibility in the eyes of the world’s leaders?*

The Restoration

Isaiah 49:8-13, KJV

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 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall

Isaiah 49:8-13, NIV

⁸This is what the LORD says:

“In a time of my favor I will answer you;
 in a day of salvation I will help you;

I will keep you and will make you

to be a covenant for the people,
 to restore the land,

and to reassign its desolate inheritances,

⁹saying to the captives, ‘Come out,’
 to those who are in darkness,

‘Be free!’

feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

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

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

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.

“They shall feed beside the roads on find pasture on every barren hill.

¹⁰They will neither hunger nor thirst,
nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them.

He who has compassion on them will guide them
and lead them beside springs of water.

¹¹I will turn all my mountains into roads,
and my highways will be raised up.

¹² See, they will come from afar—
some from the north, some from the west,
some from the region of Aswan.”

¹³Shout for joy, you heavens;
rejoice, you earth;
burst into song, you mountains!
For the LORD comforts his people
and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.”

In God’s perfect timing, the Lord would not only make a new covenant with His people, but the Messiah Himself would be that covenant. The Messiah’s driving force would be to guide those who are like sheep without a shepherd, who are “in [spiritual] darkness” (vs. 9). This section ends with a celebration for the ways people are returning to God. Drawn by His Spirit, they come from all points of the compass, Jew and non-Jew alike. They are all drawn by the love and compassion of the Messiah. Those who have been afflicted find comfort, hope, and healing in His hands.

8. *From what would the Lord rescue His people?*

9. *What would be the cause for great celebration?*

Shining the Light

God sent His Servant as the Light for Jews and Gentiles alike. These verses in Isaiah provide insight on Jesus and His ministry. This additional understanding of Jesus as Messiah encourages us to help spread His light today.

Called from the womb by name, God ordained Jesus to have a ministry of reconciliation and atonement. Messiah's words reveal the inner hearts of people, with the purpose of bringing the people of Israel back to God.

As the Jewish people embraced God and His Servant, they could then fulfill their God-given purpose of bringing light to the Gentiles. God's Servant came not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. He shows compassion and offers salvation to all people, shining the light of God's love into all the corners of the earth. In this way, Jesus is our example, that we also are called by God to show compassion and shine the light of the Gospel for others so they, too, may see the salvation and reconciliation God offers through His Messiah. God's goal has always been to redeem all people through the light of His Servant.

We rejoice and take heart in the gift of God's new covenant with us through Jesus. When we turn to Him, He delivers us from spiritual darkness, hunger, and thirst. Jesus' love and compassion shines forth in a dark world of empty promises, in part through His people. We experience healing and restoration to God through Jesus, and this hope is the light we need to help spread around the world as His followers. In these ways, we partner with God's Servant to serve as a light to all people.

10. *What is the significance of Jesus' role as Servant?*

11. *What was God's purpose in sending His Messiah into the world?*

12. *How would you describe the light of the Gospel?*

13. *How might we serve others with a gift of God's light?*

Take His Light to the World

This passage in Isaiah portrays a wonderful description of God's Servant sent to redeem His people. Just as Messiah's purpose was to bring light into the world, now God's intention for His followers is to serve as a light to the nations.

▶ *Reflect on what you have learned in this lesson to complete these sentences:*

▶ *I am encouraged by the truth that _____.*

▶ *Jesus brought light into the world when He _____.*

▶ *One way I can help spread the light of the Gospel to others is by _____.*

KEY VERSE

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; —Isaiah 49:8, KJV

This is what the LORD says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances." —Isaiah 49:8, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of June 13 through June 19

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

Mon. Psalm 75—God Puts Down and Lifts Up.

Tue. Leviticus 26:3-13—God Protects a Restored, Holy People.

Wed. Luke 6:20-26—Blessings upon God's People.

Thu. Psalm 30—God Has Turned Mourning into Dancing.

Fri. James 1:13-18—God Gives Good Gifts.

Sat. Deuteronomy 28:9-14—Blessings for Obedience.

Sun. Isaiah 49:18-23—Wait for the Lord.