

Isaiah 42:1-9

- My servant will establish justice on earth -

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Introduction

- ❖ Justice is one of the worlds greatest needs, perhaps the worlds greatest need:
 - Justice among the nations, the peoples, and individuals.
 - Political justice – power.
 - Economic justice among the poor and the rich.
 - Social justice – to fight inequality, racism.
 - Family justice – marriages, parents and children.
- ❖ Isaiah calls for attention: See my servant.... “he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.” (Isa 42:4).
 - He will not be like the leaders of this world!
 - “He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.”
 - He will be “a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (Isa 42:6, 7).
 - The future is in his hands.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Book of Isaiah. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ Isaiah 42:1-9 is part of Isaiah 40-55.
 - Isaiah 40-55 “urges his fellow exiles to regard Babylon as their ancestors had regarded Egypt and to depart with him on a new Exodus and entry into Zion, by which acts they will become Israel once again. His program is clear and pervades all the speeches.”¹

The Servant Songs	
Isa 42:1-9	The first servant song: the servant will establish justice
Isa 49:1-6	The second servant song: the servant will be a light for the gentiles
Isa 50:4-9	The third servant song: the obedient and suffering servant
Isa 52:13:53:11	The fourth servant song: the servant will suffer and be vindicated by the Lord.

Form and structure

- ❖ Isaiah 42:1-9 has the character of a prophetic song. It has the same features as the Psalms. See below.
- ❖ There are two parts. The first is an announcement or vocation, meant to draw attention, the second part is the installation of the servant.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SERVANT	
<p><i>Announcement: (verse 1-4) I (the Lord) addresses the people of Israel</i></p>	<p>“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.”</p>
INSTALLATION OF THE SERVANT	

¹ Clifford, R. J. (1992). *Isaiah, Book of: Second Isaiah*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.) (Vol. 3, p. 491).

<p><i>(verse 5)</i> <i>the prophet</i> <i>addresses the servant</i> <i>of the Lord (and the</i> <i>people of Israel)</i></p> <p><i>This is what the Lord</i> <i>says (1):</i> <i>(verse 6-7)</i> <i>I (the Lord) addresses</i> <i>his servant (and the</i> <i>people of Israel)</i></p>	<p>“This is what God the Lord says— he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:</p> <p>“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.</p>
<p><i>This is what the Lord</i> <i>says (2):</i> <i>(verse 8-9)</i> <i>I (the Lord) addresses</i> <i>his servant (and he</i> <i>informs the people of</i> <i>Israel)</i></p>	<p>“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”</p>

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

Historical context and the second part of Isaiah

- ❖ “The historical context of chapters 40–55 differs entirely from that of chapters 1–39. The enemy of Israel is the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626–539 b.c.), not the Neo-Assyrian Empire of Isaiah (935–612 b.c.), which collapsed with the destruction of Nineveh in 612 b.c. The gentile king in chaps. 40–55 is Cyrus of Persia (560–530 b.c.; see Isaiah 41:2–3, 25; 44:24–45:13; 48:14), not the Assyrian king. The people of Israel are in Babylon, not in 8th-century Jerusalem; the message is to leave Babylon, to cross the desert, and to return to Zion.”²

Poetry

² Clifford, R. J. (1992). *Isaiah, Book of: Second Isaiah*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed., Vol. 3, p. 490).

- ❖ The speeches are poems, part of a rich and sophisticated tradition of poetry that predated the Israelites. The tradition made only slight use of rhyme, relying instead on alliteration, assonance, wordplays, and especially parallelism of two, three, or more lines. Parallelism is the development of an idea by its repetition. **Isaiah utilizes this virtually universal technique in Hebrew poetry in striking ways. Not only lines, but actors, scenes, and whole passages are repeated for emphasis or contrast.**³

Exposition

Verse 1-4

- ❖ **“Here is my servant, whom I uphold,”**
 - **“Here”.** Look, pay attention. This marker of attention is also used in Isaiah 41:15 and 41:29. It stands in contrast to the “Behold”, that introduced the previous verse.⁴ The ESV makes this more visible in the translation:
 - **“Behold, they (gods) are all a delusion;** their works are nothing; their metal images are empty wind” (Isa 41:29).
 - **“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen,** in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isa 42:1).
 - **“my servant”.** He is not mentioned by name. In other passages, the servant is Jacob, the people of Israel (Isa 41:8; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4, 48:20). He is also not to be identified with the Persian king Cyrus, who is an agent in the hands of God (Isa 44:28; 45:1, 13). In Isaiah 49:5, 6 the servant is distinguished from Jacob:
 - **“And 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.”**
 - Ogden and Sterk remark: “Yahweh does not name his **servant**, but he focuses on his role. This adds to the mystery and provokes heightened expectation here.”⁵ Who is he?
 - **“My servant”:** he will carry out the justice of the Lord and will be responsible to the Lord.

“The performance of the service; this service is unmistakably reminiscent of that of the prophets. **Elements of the royal office are also evident.**” “The royal motifs in the Servant Songs can be interpreted in relation to the fact that the Old Testament also describes the king elsewhere as God’s servant.” “The suffering of the servant receives a positive, beneficial significance in 52:13–53:12 through

³ Clifford, R. J. (1992). *Isaiah, Book of: Second Isaiah*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed., Vol. 3, p. 495).

⁴ Young, E. (1972, p. 108)..

⁵ Ogden, G. S., & Sterk, J. (2011, p. 1129).

his representative function affirmed by God and confirmed through his death. This is the first such statement in the Old Testament and it surpasses everything previously said of a servant in Yahweh's service."⁶

- **"whom I uphold"**: the Lord will support him. See Isaiah 41:10:
 - "So do not fear, **for I am with you**; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." See also Isaiah 43.
- ❖ **"my chosen one in whom I delight;"**
 - My chosen: also Moses (Ps 106:23); David (Ps 89:4), the people (Isa 43:20) Israel (45:4), the descendants of Abraham and Jacob (Ps 105:6).
 - ESV: **"my soul delights"** is the same as **"I delight"** (NIV).
- ❖ **"I will put my Spirit on him and."** See also **Isaiah 11:2 and 61:1**. See also below, applied to Christ.
 - The Spirit of God will show wisdom and knowledge, mercy and righteousness, patience and endurance. See also the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).
- ❖ **"He will bring justice to the nations."**
 - "Nations" includes Israel and the other nations. See also Matthew 20:18-20.
 - "justice"
 - Ogden and Sterk: **"Justice is one of the major concerns of the prophets in the Old Testament.** The Hebrew noun for **justice** comes from a root meaning 'to judge,' with the implication 'according to the law.' This indicates that **justice** involves the judgments or laws that God gave to Israel. **Justice** is the result of obedience to these laws. If people respect the good laws of God, the poor will not be oppressed; if a judge applies the laws correctly, offenders will be punished and those who were robbed will be compensated. In many languages it may be difficult to find an abstract noun that renders the full idea of **justice**. If so, translators may need to find descriptive phrases that fit the context in each case; for example, here the whole line may be rendered 'try to do those things that the Law demands [you to do].'"⁷
 - Bring justice to the nations implies salvation and shalom, also for the people of God in particular.⁸

JUSTICE	
Verse 1	"I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations."

⁶ Jenni, E., & Westermann, C. (1997, p. 828).

⁷ Ogden, G. S., & Sterk, J. (2011, p. 50).

⁸ Baltzer, K. (2001, p. 128).

Verse 3	"In faithfulness he will bring forth justice. "
Verse 4	"He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. "

- In verse 1 and 3, the same (Hebrew) verb is used.
 - Verse 1 describes the appointment to the task.
 - Verse 3 describes the execution of the task, in faithfulness.
 - Verse 4 describes the **completion** of the task, to establish justice on earth.
- Justice: "Here it can refer to 'good social order' based on God's revealed laws."⁹
- ❖ **"He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets."**
 - He will do his work quietly without any public display.
 - A just judge, a wise teacher, a leader doesn't need to raise his voice.
- ❖ **"A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out."**
 - The bruised reed and the smoldering wick are images of the people of Israel. The people of Israel were a Kingdom of priests:
 - Exodus 19:5-6: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."
 - The servant will be patient, compassionate, and merciful.
- ❖ **"In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;"**
 - The servant will be faithful to his sender, the Lord God, and to the people to whom he has been sent.
 - We still look forward till everything will be accomplished
- ❖ **"He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth."**
 - **"falter"** is related to **"smoldering"** (wick).
 - **"be discouraged"** is related to **"bruised"** (reed).
 - Whereas the people of Israel failed to bring justice to the nations, the servant will not fail.
 - **"till he establishes justice on earth."** See above.
- ❖ **"In his law the islands will put their hope."**
 - **"Law":** "תּוֹרָה" = **direction, instruction, law.**¹⁰ Ogden and Sterk comment: **"The Hebrew word for *law* (*Torah*) is better rendered 'teaching' or 'instruction' in this context."**¹¹
 - **"Islands."** From the perspective of the people of Israel, the islands refer probably to the Mediterranean Sea, its islands and coastal regions.

⁹ Ogden, G. S., & Sterk, J. (2011, p. 1129).

¹⁰ Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977, p. 435).

¹¹ Ogden, G. S., & Sterk, J. (2011, p. 1132).

- The law was initially limited to the people of Israel, now its teaching will reach the ends of the world.
- The power of the Persian Empire was limited to the Middle East, now the law will exercise its influence on the islands.

Verse 5-7

- ❖ **“This is what God the Lord says.”** The prophet is the Lord’s spokesman. The prophet is not to be identified with the servant. See also Acts 8:31-35 with regard to Isaiah 53:7, 8.
 - This is the only verse where God is designated as **“the God JHWH (Lord)”**. This emphasizes the authority of God as the only God.
- ❖ **“— He who created the heavens...”** As Creator, God the Lord has supreme power and the authority to judge. He gives life to all people.
 - This is a beautiful poetical description of the Creator and his creation. See also Isaiah 40:26, 28;
 - **“who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:”** There is no distinction between the people of Israel and the people who walk on the earth, all receive their breath from the God the Lord (Gen 2:7; where Adam stands for mankind). Compare Matthew 5:45:
 - “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”
- ❖ **“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;”**
 - **“In righteousness”** describes the call of the Lord. It signifies the loyal behaviour of the servant towards the king, the Lord. The servant will act according to the will of the Lord.
 - **“‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work’”** (Jn 4:34).
- ❖ **“I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you”**
 - See also Isaiah 41:13. The Lord will support his servant in every respect and protect him.
- ❖ **“And will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,”**
 - **“And will make you.”** God the Lord takes the initiative.
 - **“To be a covenant for the people.”**
 - “To say that the servant is a covenant is to say that all the blessings of the covenant are embodied in, have their root and origin in, and are dispensed by him. At the same time he is himself at the center of all these blessings, and to receive them is to receive him, for without him there can be no blessings. Such

language could not apply to Israel, but only to One who may truly be designated a covenant.”¹²

- The Last Supper: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:24). He will be a mediator between God and his people. But this covenant will extend to the nations:
- **“light for the nations”:**
 - Light contrasts darkness. Darkness stands for oppression, Light is a metaphor for justice, righteousness, life, peace and joy.
 - Isaiah 51:4-5: “Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; **my justice will become a light to the nations**. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and **my arm will bring justice to the nations**. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.”
 - “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (Jn 8:12). See also Isaiah 2:5 and 9:2.
 - Jesus said to his disciples: “**You are the light of the world**. (...) **let your light shine before men**, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:14-16).
- These words remind us of the words spoken to Abram (Gen 12:2-3): “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; **and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you**.”
 - “Universality is not, therefore, a violation or adjustment of the covenant; it is its fulfilment. It brings, in the Servant, the *light* of truth, the healing of disabilities (*open eyes*), liberation from oppressive restrictions (*free captives*) and transformation of circumstances (*from ... darkness*): like Eden, with perfect people, perfect society and perfect environment (61:1).”¹³
- ❖ **“to open eyes that are blind”**
 - This blindness refers to spiritual blindness caused by sin and by ignorance (Rom 1:18-23). (See also: Isaiah 35:5.)
- ❖ **“to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.”**
 - Again two parallels. It must be noted that captives were sitting in darkness.

¹² Young, E. (1972, p. 120, 121).

¹³ Motyer, J. A. (1999, p. 295).

- Darkness stands in sharp contrast to light.
 - John 8:12: “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. **Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.**”

Verse 8-9

❖ **“I am the Lord; that is my name!”**

- This sentence can be translated **“I Yahweh – that’s my name! – and I will not...”**
- There is only one God. See also: verse 5-7 and Isa 45:21-22.
 - Apart from him, there is no other God: Isaiah 43:11, 44:6, 8; 45:6, 14; 45:18, 21-22; 46:9.

❖ **“I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”**

- **“My glory”** is the honour God must receive. See also Exodus 20:3-5, the second commandment. (See also Isaiah 48:11.),
- The Lord contrasts himself with the idols. (See also Isa 40:18-31; 41:22-24; 42:17; 44:6-20; 45:20; 46:1-13; 48:12-15.
 - **“Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made”** (Isa 43:7).
 -

❖ **“See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”**

- **“See”** calls for attention, both of the servant as of the listener/reader. (See also Isaiah 41:21–29; 48:3–8.)
- **“The former things.”** See also Isaiah 40:21; 41:4, 26; 46:10;
- This is in accordance with the name of the Lord: Isaiah 41:1, 44:6, 48:12 and other passages:
 - **“Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.”**
- **“before they spring into being I announce them to you.”** Spring into being – like a plant growing – new developments, new perspectives.
- God is in charge of the flow of events. What an assurance both for the servant as for the people: “We can imagine the Servant, faced with the task of bringing divine revelation to the Gentile world. It is a world full of ‘gods’ who, however unreal they are, nevertheless exercise unimaginable power over human minds and hearts. What an

assurance, then, that in reality there is only one God, jealous for his *name* and *glory*, a God as much in control of the future as he is of the past, therefore the Guarantor of the fulfilment of his Word."¹⁴

Application

Emphasize

- ❖ God, the Lord is calling for attention and expectancy! (verse 1)

Glorify God the Lord

- ❖ He is the Creator (verse 5).
- ❖ He is the Lord of justice and righteousness (verse 1, 4, 5).
- ❖ He provides the mediator, the servant.
 - The Lord's prayer is the prayer of the son, the servant.

Glorify Christ the Lord

- ❖ He is the promised Servant and he will succeed where the servant Jacob failed and became a smouldering wick and a bruised reed.
 - He went out in the power of the Holy Spirit and the support of God.
 - He will bring justice to the ends of this world.
 - He is the light for the nations and a covenant of the people.
 - He is strong. He will succeed. He will not shout and raise his voice.
- ❖ He has commanded his disciples to go out to all the peoples and to teach the Thora (Mt 20:18-20).

The need of this world: justice and law, Thora, teaching.

- ❖ Justice:
 - This is what the world needs:
 - Economical and social justice: taking care of the needy.
 - Justice among the families.
 - Political justice: leaders serving the nations, the people.
 - Environmental justice: taking care of the environment, the created world.
- ❖ To open the eyes of the blind:

¹⁴ Motyer, J. A. (1999, p. 295).

- Blindness caused by sin, ignorance, other gods, science.

The Gospel of Matthew and Isaiah 42:1-4

❖ Matthew 3:16-17:

- “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”

❖ Matthew 17:5:

- “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’”

❖ Matthew 12:15-21:

- “Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

“Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he leads justice to victory.
In his name the nations will put their hope.”

- Matthew 5:14-16:

- “You are the light of the world. (...) In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

❖ Matthew 28:18-20:

- “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

- The task of the Servant Christ will be fulfilled by his disciples, the church.

Other passages from Isaiah (Spirit)

❖ Isaiah 11:2-5:

- “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord— and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.”
- ❖ Isaiah 61:1-2:
 - “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.”

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