

## 38. Defining God's End-Time Servant (Isaiah 40–49)

God's end-time servant has been and will be a point of controversy to all who haven't searched the words of Isaiah and the prophets but who instead assign all messianic prophecies to Jesus. This "precept of men" has caused misunderstanding between Jewish and Christian concepts of the Messiah. Persons who actually analyze the prophecies for what they say—not for what they want them to say that supports their preconceived ideas—soon realize that prophecies about God's servant deal with one who prepares the way for Israel's God to come on earth to reign. As an integral part of the "restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21), God's servant restores Israel's twelve tribes, gathers them in a new exodus from the four parts of the earth, builds the temple, and assigns them lands of inheritance.

God has deliberately hidden his servant from the world, moreover, in order to try the loyalties of the Ephraimite Gentiles just as he tried the loyalties of the Jews in Jesus' day: "Hear me, O isles; listen, you distant peoples: Jehovah called me before I was in the belly; before I was in my mother's womb, he mentioned me by name. He has made my mouth like a sharp sword—in the shadow of his hand he hid me. He has made me into a polished arrow—in his quiver he kept me secret. He said to me, You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Isaiah 49:1–3).

The servant's role of restoring Israel's natural lineages—the Jews, Ten Tribes, and Lamanites of today—becomes clear from the temporal tasks God commands him to perform with the help of those Ephraimite Gentiles who remain loyal: "Jehovah has said—he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to restore Jacob to him, Israel having been gathered to him; for I won honor in the eyes of Jehovah when my God became my strength—he said: It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore those preserved of Israel. I will also appoint you to be a light to the Gentiles, that my salvation may be to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:5–6).

"I have created you and appointed you to be a covenant of the people, to restore the Land and reapportion the desolate estates, to say to the captives, Come forth! and to those in darkness, Show yourselves! They shall feed along the way and find pasture on all barren heights; they shall not hunger or thirst, nor be smitten by the heatwave or the sun: he who has mercy on them will guide them; he will lead them by springs of water. All my mountain ranges I will appoint as roads; my highways shall be on high. See these, coming from afar, these, from the northwest, and these, from the land of Sinim" (Isaiah 49:8–11).

The majority of God's collective servant, meanwhile—who are his covenant people of the Ephraimite Gentiles—have so lost touch with God's holy purposes that he has to send his individual servant to chasten them: "O you deaf, listen; O you blind, look and see! Who is blind but my own servant, or so deaf as the messenger I have sent? Who is blind like those I have commissioned, as uncomprehending as the servant of Jehovah—seeing much but not giving heed, with open ears hearing nothing?" (Isaiah 42:18–20); "It is I who rightfully raise him up, who facilitate his every step; he will rebuild my city and set free my exiles without price or bribe, says Jehovah of Hosts" (Isaiah 45:13).

Because the servant's task is worldwide from the start, Isaiah likens him to a bird of prey, on the one hand, and as an exemplar of righteousness, on the other: "I summon a bird of prey from the east, from a distant land the man who performs my counsel. What I have spoken, I bring to pass; what I have planned, I do. Hear me, you stubborn-hearted, who are far from righteousness: I have brought near my righteousness; it is not now far off—my salvation shall no longer be delayed" (Isaiah 46:11–13).

God's servant personifies righteousness to God's people in a time of unrighteousness or self-righteousness: "Who has raised up Righteousness from the east, calling him to [the place of] his foot? Who has delivered nations to him, toppled their rulers, rendering them as dust to his sword, as driven stubble to his bow? He puts them to flight, passing on unhindered by paths his feet have never trod" (Isaiah 41:2–3);

"I have raised up one from the north who calls on my name, who shall come from the direction of sunrise. He shall come upon dignitaries as on mud, tread them as clay like a potter. Who announced this beforehand, so we would know, [declared it] ahead of time, that we might say, He was right? Indeed, not one could foretell it, not one make it known; no one has heard from you any [prophetic] utterance. But to Zion, he shall be its harbinger; I will appoint him as a herald of good tidings to Jerusalem" (Isaiah 41:25–27).

Because of the many restorative roles the servant performs, Isaiah portrays him under different personas—Moses, who led Israel's exodus out of Egypt; King David, the Lord's anointed; Cyrus, who freed Israel's captives and commanded the restoration of Jerusalem and its temple; and so forth: "Thus says Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whom I grasp by the right hand, to subdue nations before him, to ungird the loins of rulers, opening doors ahead of him, letting no gates remain shut: I will go before you and level all obstacles; I will break in pieces brazen doors and cut through iron bars" (Isaiah 45:1–2);

"Who fulfills the word of his servant, accomplishes the aims of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, It shall be reinhabited, and of the cities of Judah, They shall be rebuilt, their ruins I will restore, who says to the deep, Become dry; I am drying up your currents, who says of Cyrus, He is my shepherd; he will do whatever I will. He will say of Jerusalem that it must be rebuilt, its temple foundations relaid" (Isaiah 44:26–28).

Resembling Israel's ancient exodus out of Egypt, the end-time exodus of Israel's natural lineages out of Babylon or the world proceeds unharmed by elements or enemies who may stand in the way: "When you cross the waters, I will be with you; [when you traverse] the rivers, you shall not be overwhelmed. Though you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; its flame shall not consume you" (Isaiah 43:2); "Thus says Jehovah—who provides a way in the Sea, a path through the mighty waters, who dispatches chariots and horses, armies of men in full strength; they lie down as one, to rise no more, they flicker and die, snuffed out like a wick" (Isaiah 43:16–17).

"Go forth out of Babylon, flee from Chaldea! Make this announcement with resounding voice; broadcast it to the end of the earth. Say, Jehovah has redeemed his servant Jacob. They thirsted not when he led them through arid places: he caused water to flow for them from the rock; he

cleaved the rock and water gushed out” (Isaiah 48:20–21); “Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, Give up! to the south, Withhold not! Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth—all who are called by my name, whom I have formed, molded and wrought for my own glory” (Isaiah 43:5–7).

The servant’s fellow-servants—the spiritual kings and queens of the Ephraimite Gentiles—gather the elect of Israel’s natural lineages home to Zion: “I will lift up my hand to the nations, raise my ensign to the peoples; and they will bring your sons in their bosoms and carry your daughters on their shoulders. Kings shall be your foster fathers, queens your nursing mothers” (Isaiah 49:22–23).