

# Jesus Christ, the Elect Servant of the LORD

## Isaiah 42:1-7

### Introduction:

- From **Isaiah 40** to **53**, the word “servant” is used frequently—20 times, to be exact. The title “servant” (or, “my servant”) sometimes refers to the nation of Israel as a whole, and sometimes to the Messiah.
1. In four places, the word “servant” refers to the nation of Israel as a whole (**41:8-10; 44:1-3; 44:21; 45:4**).

God raised up the people of Israel to be His servants, in order that they might be a witness of Him before the nations of earth (**Leviticus 25:55; 1 Kings 8:40-43**). The nation of Israel as a whole had a huge role in God’s plan of redemption, in that through their nation the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was born into the world. Therefore, the nation as a whole is called Jehovah’s “servant” (singular).

**Genesis 22:15-18** (In **verse 17**, the singular word “seed” is used to refer to all the descendants of Abraham as a unit. However, the word “seed” in **verse 18** does *not* have to refer to the nation as a whole, because there is nothing in **verse 18** that indicates that God is referring to more than one “seed.” This leaves open the possibility that one *particular* seed from the nation of Israel will bring blessing to all nations.)

**Galatians 3:16** (Paul points out that the singular word “seed” does, in fact, refer to a particular individual among Abraham’s descendants, and not to the entire nation: and that Person is Jesus Christ. Incidentally, the phrase “*and to thy seed*” in **Galatians 3:16** is a quote from **Genesis 13:14-15**, where God promised that He would give the land of Canaan to Abraham and to His “seed” forever. God views the land of Canaan as belonging not only to the nation of Israel, but to the Messiah in particular!)

**Revelation 12:1-6, 17** (Clearly, the “woman” who gives birth to the Messiah in this vision is not a picture of Mary, but of the entire nation of Israel! This shows the importance that God places upon the nation of Israel in bringing about His plan of redemption.)

2. In another four places, the word “servant” clearly refers to an *individual* from the nation of Israel—the Messiah (**42:1-7, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, and 52:13-53:12**).

In the following lessons, we will be studying the four “servant” passages that refer to the Messiah. **Isaiah 42** is the first of the four. Altogether, these four passages are often called “The Servant Songs.”

### Isaiah 42:1-7

#### I. The identity of “my Servant” (v. 1)

A. The title “my servant” in **Isaiah 41** refers to the nation of Israel.

### **Isaiah 41:8-14**

B. However, in **Isaiah 42**, the title “my servant” refers to the Messiah.

Jewish people who reject Jesus as their Messiah vehemently deny that any of the “servant” passages in **Isaiah 40-53** refer to a particular “missionary” from Jehovah (in other words, to the Messiah). They insist that every time the word “servant” is used in these chapters, it refers to the nation of Israel. For example, the Jewish website Aish.com makes this “anti-missionary” statement in their attempt to de-bunk the belief that Jesus is the Servant of Jehovah:

*“In actuality, Isaiah 53 directly follows the theme of chapter 52, describing the exile and redemption of the Jewish people. The prophecies are written in the singular form because the Jews (“Israel”) are regarded as one unit. Throughout Jewish scripture, Israel is repeatedly called, in the singular, the “Servant of God” (see Isaiah 43:8). In fact, Isaiah states no less than 11 times in the chapters prior to 53 that the Servant of God is Israel. When read correctly, Isaiah 53 clearly [and ironically] refers to the Jewish people being “bruised, crushed and as sheep brought to slaughter” at the hands of the nations of the world. These descriptions are used throughout Jewish scripture to graphically describe the suffering of the Jewish people (see Psalm 44). Isaiah 53 concludes that when the Jewish people are redeemed, the nations will recognize and accept responsibility for the inordinate suffering and death of the Jews.”*

To those who have not studied Scripture carefully, this “de-bunking” sounds convincing enough. However, these arguments are bogus, for multiple reasons:

1. In **Isaiah 41:8**, Jehovah directly addressed Israel and said, **“Thou art my servant.”** In **Isaiah 42:1**, however, the LORD (who is *still addressing Israel*) says, **“Behold my servant.”**

Obviously, the “servant” here in **Isaiah 42:1** is someone *other than* Israel, because God is commanding Israel to “behold” Him!

2. In **Isaiah 53:9** we are told that Jehovah’s Servant **“had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.”** If the Jewish people really believe that they, as a nation, have done no violence, and that there is no deceit in their mouth, they are tragically self-deceived. The LORD described Israel as a **“sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity”** (**Isaiah 1:4**).

3. In **Isaiah 53:3**, Isaiah states that Israel would not “esteem” Jehovah’s Servant. Isaiah says that **“we esteemed him not.”** By using the pronoun “we,” Isaiah is referring to his own people, Israel.

If the Jews want to believe that “my Servant” in **Isaiah 53** is Israel, then they would have to interpret **Isaiah 53:3** to mean that they, as a nation, are lacking in self-esteem! Clearly, this is not the case, since the Jewish people esteem themselves very highly. In their daily prayers, the orthodox Jews say this about themselves:

*"Praiseworthy are those who dwell in Your house; may they always praise You, Selah! Praiseworthy is the people for whom this is so, praiseworthy is the people whose G-d is the LORD!"* [The Artscroll Siddur]

[Note that they do not say, "**Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD,**" as the Scripture actually says (**Psalm 144:15**). Instead, they say "*Praiseworthy is the people*"!]

4. In **Isaiah 53:8** we are told that Jehovah's Servant would be "stricken" (hit, bruised) "**for** (on account of) **the transgression of my people.**" According to this verse, Isaiah's people (Israel) would actually be responsible for the striking of Jehovah's Servant! Their transgression would be the *cause* of His suffering. Clearly, "my servant" is *not* Israel!
  
5. According to **Isaiah 53**, Jehovah's Servant would die, be buried "**with the rich,**" and come alive again (**Isaiah 53:9-10**). Israel, as a nation, has never "died," been buried, or risen again (certainly not spiritually)! Israel is still in a state of spiritual deadness, as they themselves would have to admit. Their nation leads the world in its acceptance of the grossest of sins.
  
6. In **Isaiah 53:10** we are told that Jehovah's Servant would be made "**an offering for sin.**" Since Israel is a "**sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity**" (**Isaiah 1:4**), then how could Israel possibly be made a sacrificial atonement for the sins of *any* nation (much less for their *own* sins)?
  
7. For what it's worth, even the Jews' own ancient collection of rabbinical commentaries, the *Targum*, states that the "my Servant" of **Isaiah 42** is the Messiah!<sup>1</sup> Modern Jews vehemently deny what their own ancient rabbis taught, because if they acknowledge that some of the "my Servant" passages refer to the Messiah, then they would be forced to admit that Jesus is the fulfilment of those prophecies! The prophecies of Jesus in these passages are stunningly clear.

## II. The authority of "my Servant" (v. 1)

- In this passage, the authority of Jehovah's Servant, Jesus Christ, is powerfully presented.

### A. Jehovah refers to His Servant as "**mine elect** (chosen)" (v. 1).

This title indicates a unique relationship. Just as Israel has a unique relationship, *as a nation*, with Jehovah, so the Messiah, as an individual, has a unique relationship with Jehovah. This is why, in the New Testament, Jesus is called "the only begotten (literally, "one of a kind") Son of God."

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<sup>1</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 108.

## **1 Peter 2:6**

- B. Jehovah states that His Servant is He *“in whom my soul delighteth”* (v. 1).

This language indicates a wholehearted delight which springs from the innermost part of Jehovah’s being. The same cannot be said for Israel. God has *not* always had wholehearted, unreserved delight in Israel, because Israel has constantly sinned against Him. The Messiah, on the other hand, is ever the object of Jehovah’s delight, because He has been one with Him from eternity, and because He obeys His Father’s will at all times.

## **Matthew 3:17**

## **Matthew 17:5**

By the way, the Scripture makes it clear that the “delight” goes both ways. Christ always delights in His Father.

## **Psalms 40:6-8**

## **Hebrews 10:5-9**

## **John 8:29**

- C. Jehovah states that *“I have put my spirit upon Him”* (v. 1).

Throughout **Isaiah**, we are told that the Spirit of the LORD would be upon the Messiah.

## **Isaiah 61:1**

**Isaiah 48:16** (Note that this verse teaches the Trinity! The LORD is the one speaking; yet, He is sent by “the Lord GOD,” and by His “Spirit”!)

What, exactly, does the statement *“I have put my spirit upon him”* mean? First of all, it is important to realise what this statement does *not* mean.

1. It does not mean that Jesus was a mere a man with the power of the Holy Spirit in His life, like other prophets who had the Spirit come “upon them” at various times.
2. It does not mean that Jesus was *without* the Holy Spirit until the day of His baptism. (This is what the ancient gnostic cults taught; and it is what modern cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach.) The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in a visible form like a dove in order to *show* the people that Jesus is the Messiah; but the Spirit had *always* been with Jesus before that day!

The statement *“I have put my spirit upon Him”* simply means that the Holy Spirit was upon Jesus without measure, all the time, from conception. How could it be otherwise, when Jesus is equal with the Holy Spirit in being, power, and glory?

**John 3:31-34** (The words of John the Baptist concerning Jesus)

**Isaiah 11:1-5**

**1 John 5:7**

**D.** Jehovah states that *“I the LORD have called thee in righteousness”* (v. 6).

In **verse 5**, the LORD makes it clear that none other than He Himself, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and man, has given His “Servant” His authority. But He doesn’t stop there. He goes on to say that He has called this servant “in righteousness.”

This phrase “in righteousness” distinguishes Jehovah’s Servant from any other man who has ever been called by God to serve Him. Consider the contrast between other servants of Jehovah and *the* “Servant of Jehovah”:

1. We who know the LORD have the privilege of being “called” to service only because we have been *declared* “righteous” (“justified”) (**Romans 8:30**). In reality, we are undeserving sinners. God’s perfect justice against sin and His perfect love for sinners were both upheld when His Son took the punishment for our sin, and thus satisfied God’s righteousness demands.

**Romans 3:21-26**

2. On the other hand, “My Servant” (the Messiah) was called “in righteousness.” He did not need to be declared righteous before He could be called, because He is, and always will be, inherently righteous.

God’s calling of His righteous Servant to purchase our redemption was in keeping with His own standard of perfect righteousness. Because Jehovah’s Servant is perfectly righteous, He was able to become our Sin-bearer, so that we, in turn, may be declared “righteous” before God.

### **III. The character of “my Servant” (vv. 2-4)**

**Verses 2-4** present us with a prophetic picture of Jesus Christ in His first coming to earth. This portrait of Jesus could be summed up in two words: “Meek” and “Lowly.”

**Matthew 11:28-30**

At first glance, one may find this prophecy hard to reconcile with the picture of Christ that we see in the Gospels. In the New Testament, we see Christ pronouncing woe upon those who rejected Him, and calling the Pharisees “hypocrites,” “blind guides,” and “fools.” These do not sound like the words of one who is soft-spoken. We also see Him, on a couple occasions, driving the money-changers out of the Temple in righteous anger. In what sense, then, did Christ not *“cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street”*? Matthew sheds

light on this question in **Matthew 12**.

### **Matthew 12:15-20**

In these verses, Matthew quotes **Isaiah 42:1-3**, and identifies Jesus as “my Servant.” Matthew specifically states that this prophecy applies to Jesus because Jesus charged those whom He had healed *not to make Him known*.

It is in this sense that Jesus did not “cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard.” Yes, He lifted up His voice against sin, and used His voice to warn sinners to repent; but He did not use His voice to promote Himself. He was not pompous, boastful, or self-promoting. He did His Father's will, and said what His Father would have Him say, and let the miracles speak for themselves; but He did not promote Himself, or force Himself upon anyone. He did not even run after those who turned their backs on Him, or try to coerce them to return.

### **John 6:66-67**

Furthermore, you do not ever see Jesus angrily defending Himself when people made false charges against Him. He gently rebuked, and asked conscience-provoking questions; but He did not use cutting, retaliatory words. For example, when Jesus was struck on the face during His trial, He gently asked, *"If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"*

### **John 18:23**

Many times, Jesus gave no defence of Himself at all—and at junctures when *we* probably would have thought it prudent for Him to defend Himself. For example, when the Jews accused Him of being "born of fornication," and of not having been born in Bethlehem, He gave no reply.

### **John 8:41**

### **John 7:40-42**

Perhaps we have trouble picturing Jesus as being meek and gentle because we sometimes have a distorted view of Him, which is based upon our own sin-warped ideas of how *we think* He should have spoken and acted. Even when Jesus pronounced woe upon the Pharisees, and called them "hypocrites," did He really say it with a red face, and in a billowing, angry tone of voice? A close look at Scripture seems to indicate that He did not. He probably said it in a sad, tearful tone of voice--just as He did when He wept over Jerusalem because of their unbelief. Jesus did not desire that even His fiercest enemies should perish.

### **Luke 19:41-44**

In **verse 4**, we are told that *"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench."* Reeds are, of course, very weak; and smoking flax (the wick of a candle) is ready to break and fall off at any minute, because it is already burnt.

These figures of speech describe people who are feeble in mind and weak in spirit—people who have been deeply bruised, hurt, crushed, or oppressed (either because of their own sinful, destructive choices in life, or because of oppression from other wicked people). Jesus did not say smooth, flowery words to sinners, and give them the impression that their sin was O.K. However, He was gentle and longsuffering with the hurting, and told them that their sins could be forgiven if they would repent and believe on Him. He quietly, gently instructed sinners.

As servants of Jehovah, we should strive to be like *the* Servant of Jehovah, Jesus Christ. We should be firm in our stand for the truth, yet gentle; patient; not self-promoting, self-defending, or self-vindicating; not forceful or coercive; and full of compassion, even toward those who revile us. In so doing, we will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

**1 Peter 2:11-15**

**2 Timothy 2:24-26**

**1 Thessalonians 5:14** (Pastors, like their Chief Shepherd, are to imitate Him, and “comfort the feeble minded.”)

In **verse 4**, the statement “*he shall not fail*” literally means “he shall not grow dim.” To put it in modern terminology... “He won’t burn out”!

The magnitude of the work that Jesus did when He was on earth is staggering. He rose early in the morning, long before daybreak, and worked until late in the night. People were constantly crowding around Him all day long; seeking to be healed; and seeking to hear His preaching. Even when He tried to take a brief rest, the people often found Him; and rather than turn them away, He got up and ministered to them. Yet, He did not tire of the work, or burn out (in spite of the constant emotional wear of being rejected by the people He was seeking to save). Even now, as He sits on His throne in heaven, His work is absolutely staggering! He is God; yet, He is still Man. As a Man, He is constantly praying and interceding for us to the Father.

**Romans 8:31-34**

#### **IV. The divine protection of “my Servant” (v. 6)**

In **verse 6**, Jehovah, speaking to His Servant, says, “*I...will hold thine hand, and will keep thee.*” Time and time again, God protected the Son from premature arrest, or premature death.

**Luke 4:28-30**

**John 7:32, 45-53**

**John 8:57-59**

**John 10:31-40**

## V. The accomplishments of “my Servant” (vv. 3-4, 6-7)

### A. He will bring forth judgment in the earth (vv. 1, 3-4).

As has been pointed out in past lessons, prophecies of Christ’s first and second comings are often mentioned in the same passage of Scripture, so that they appear to be speaking of only one coming of the Messiah to earth. Yet, if you look carefully at such passages, you cannot help but conclude that the LORD is speaking of two different comings, with two distinctly different missions.

Such is the case in this passage. On one hand, we see a picture of Christ as a meek, mild, suffering Servant, who will not break even a bruised reed; yet, in the same passage, we see a picture of Christ as Judge. (As Judge, He *will* “break” His enemies!) The reason for these two different pictures is that in His first coming, Christ came to save men; but in His second coming, He will come to judge men.

**John 3:17** [In His first coming, Christ came to save, and not to condemn (judge).]

**John 12:44-48** [Yet, Jesus made it clear that in the future, He *will* judge.]

**Matthew 25:31-46** [When Christ returns the second time, He will judge the nations.]

**Isaiah 11:1-5** [Christ will continue to judge the world during the 1,000-year Kingdom.]

### B. He will be given “*for a covenant of the people*” (v. 6).

- Who are the “people” that are associated with this “covenant”? It is one people, and one people only: Israel.

**Jeremiah 31:31-37**

**Matthew 26:27-28**

The New Covenant that God promised in the book of **Jeremiah** is associated with only one people—Israel. God made the New Covenant with Israel, just as He made the Old Covenant with Israel. The New Covenant contains two blessings:

1. The spiritual blessing of salvation and regeneration (the Holy Spirit’s living inside believers)
2. Physical blessings (concerning Israel’s dwelling in safety and prosperity in the land of Israel during the future Kingdom).

**Ezekiel 34:25-31 / 36:24-38**

**Zechariah 9:10-11**



C. He will be given for a *“light to the Gentiles”* (v. 6)

- Christ was not “set” (“appointed”) for a covenant of the Gentiles, since the New Covenant was made between God and Israel. However, Christ *was* appointed to be a *“light”* to the Gentiles (to bring the light of salvation to them). Even though the New Covenant is between God and Israel, the *spiritual* provisions contained in the New Covenant (salvation/ regeneration) are applied to all who will believe on Christ, from every nation. It was not an “afterthought” on God’s part to extend the spiritual benefit of salvation to all nations; it was His plan from the beginning.

**John 3:16 / 6:51**

- (1. As the “light to the Gentiles,” Christ was appointed to “open the blind eyes” (both physically and spiritually).

**Isaiah 60:1-3**

**Luke 2:25-32**

**Acts 13:46-49**

**John 9:6-7, 35-38**

- (2. As the “light to the Gentiles,” Christ was appointed to deliver prisoners from the dark prison house of sin. (This same “deliverance of the prisoners” prophecy is found in **Isaiah 61:1** and **Zechariah 9:10-11.**)

**Mark 5:1-21**—(The maniac of Gadara was an extreme case of a man who was delivered from the dark “prison house” of sin!)

**Mark 2:1-12** (This poor paralytic man was not in the kind of extreme bondage that the maniac of Gadara was in; yet, he still needed to be delivered from His sin.)

**Romans 6:14-23** (Every believer has been freed from the bondage of sin, and has been made a servant of righteousness.)

**Conclusion:** Jesus Christ is the elect Servant of Jehovah. Though Israel is Jehovah’s “servant” nationally, the Messiah is Jehovah’s unique, one-of-a-kind Servant. As Jehovah’s Servant, Jesus possesses unique authority, and the limitless power of the Holy Spirit.

In His first coming to earth, Christ came as the meek and humble Servant of Jehovah, to bind up the bruised and hurting. However, when He returns, He will come to judge the earth. Christ has been set for a “covenant of the people” (Israel), and a “light to the Gentiles.” Though the New Covenant was made with Israel nationally, the spiritual aspect of the covenant—the promise of forgiveness of sins and

regeneration—has been extended to all who will believe on Jesus Christ, from every kindred, tribe, and nation.