



ISAIAH 42:1-12

THE LORD’S SERVANT ~ A NEW SONG FOR A NEW DAY

This is actually the first mention in the book of Isaiah that describes the one who Isaiah calls ‘the Servant’. It starts in verse one with God’s command to this failing world. God’s command overriding theme and purpose of the entire Bible is really summed up in this verse here. “Behold My Servant whom I uphold.”

The Servant is the promised Messiah—the only one that can bring peace to the heart of man and peace to this world. So it starts off “Behold My Servant” What do you think “Behold” means? Behold means to look intently, to fix your gaze. It also means to consider and to perceive. And the whole Christian life is really based around this “Beholding.” The Christian life begins with this looking at Jesus. It’s what John the Baptist said when he first saw Jesus - “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 42:1 ¹ 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. ² He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.</p>	<p>a 42:1 Isaiah introduces to us the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, as the chosen servant of the Lord, sustained by Yahweh, sent on a divine mission to bring light and freedom to the hearts of his covenant people. Starting with ch. 42, Isaiah gives us four Servant Songs. (1) This chapter presents him as the Faithful Servant who brings light to the nations. (2) In 49:1–13 he is the Chosen Servant to bring salvation to the nations and to restore Israel. (3) In 50:4–9, we have the song of the Obedient Servant who reveals the Father. (4) In 52:13–53:12 we find the Suffering Servant. See also Matt. 12:18–21.</p> <p>b 42:1 Or “I find all my delight in him.” See Matt. 3:17.</p> <p>c 42:1 Or “whom I uphold (by my strength).”</p> <p>d 42:1 Or “placed my Spirit upon him.”</p> <p>e 42:3 “A bruised (bent over) reed.” A reed can be seen as a biblical metaphor for the feebleness of humanity. Jesus, God’s servant, is extraordinarily gentle. Rather than break weak ones, he restores and heals them. See Matt. 12:20.</p> <p>f 42:3 Or “nor extinguish a smoldering candle (those whose light and faith is growing dim).”</p> <p>g 42:4 These first four verses give us the qualifications for ministry: (1) chosen and anointed by God, (2) committed to reach the unreached, (3) gentle and compassionate, and (4) not discouraged but having unflinching courage.</p>	<p>The Lord’s Servant</p> <p>Isaiah 42:1 Take a good look at my servant! a I love him dearly, b for he is my chosen one. I have taken hold of him in my strength, c and I have clothed him with my Spirit. d He will cause justice to spring up for the nations. ² He will be gentle and will not quarrel with others in public. He will not exalt his own voice. ³ He would never crush a broken heart e nor disregard the weak and vulnerable. f He will make sure justice comes to those who are wronged. ⁴ His inner being will not become faint or discouraged, nor will his light grow dim before he establishes justice on the earth. Even the distant lands beyond the seas will hunger for his instruction. g</p>

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<p>⁵ Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶ “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.</p> <p>⁸ I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. ⁹ Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”</p> <p>¹⁰ Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. ¹¹ Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the habitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains. ¹² Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise in the coastlands.</p>	<p>h 42:6 The Hebrew text is clear that this covenant is a person, the servant of the Lord. In him is found all the blessings of the covenant. He is the embodiment of God’s covenant promises.</p> <p>i 42:7 See Isa. 61:1–2; Luke 4:16–21.</p> <p>j 42:9 Or “The former things (prophecies), behold—they have come!”</p> <p>k 42:9 A possible metaphor for the resurrection of Jesus.</p> <p>l 42:10 Every new thing God does requires a new song to declare it. See Rev. 5:9.</p> <p>m 42:11 Kedar was a son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13) and his tribe were considered nomads. Kedar can also be seen as a metaphor for the old nature.</p> <p>n 42:11 Sela means “rock” (Song. 2:14) and was once the capitol of Edom.</p> <p>o 42:11 See Song. 4:8.</p>	<p>⁵ Here are the words of the true God, Yahweh, the one who created the starry heavens and stretched them out. He is the one who formed the earth and filled it with life. He gives breath to every person and spirit to everyone everywhere. ⁶ “I, Yahweh, have commissioned you in righteousness to succeed. I will take your hand in love and watch over you. I will give you as a covenant for the people, a walking-light to the nations. ⁷ Your mission is to open blind eyes, to set prisoners free from dark dwellings, and to open prison doors to those who are held by darkness. h</p> <p>⁸ I am Yahweh; that is my name. I will not give my glory to another god nor my renown to idols. ⁹ Don’t you see that what I have prophesied has come to pass? i And now I am foretelling the future. I declare it to you before it sprouts up. j</p> <p>A New Song for a New Day</p> <p>¹⁰ Sing to Yahweh a brand-new song! k Sing his praise until it echoes from the ends of the earth! Sailors and sea creatures, praise him! Islands and all their inhabitants, sing his praise! ¹¹ Let the desert and its villages lift their voices in praise! Let the tent villages of Kedar l shout their praises! Let the residents of Sela’s cliffs m shout with glee, with a celebration shout from the mountaintops! n ¹² Let them give Yahweh the glorious praise he deserves and declare his praise in the islands!</p>

Bible Knowledge Commentary

JOHN A. MARTIN

- THE INDIVIDUAL SERVANT CONTRASTED WITH THE SERVANT NATION (CHAP. 42)

- **Verses 1-17** in this chapter are the first of Isaiah’s “Servant Songs” referring to the Messiah. Israel is called the servant of the Lord (41:8; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 48:20). And the Messiah, on whom God has placed His Spirit (42:1; cf. 11:2), is also called the Servant (cf. 49:3, 5-7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11). Which servant Isaiah was referring to in each passage must be determined by the context and the characteristics assigned to the servant. Israel as God’s servant was supposed to help bring the world to a knowledge of God, but she failed. So the Messiah, the Lord’s Servant, who epitomizes the nation of Israel, will fulfill God’s will.
- **The Servant and His work** (42:1-17)
 - **42:1-4.** Some Bible students say My Servant here refers to Israel, which is clearly the case in verse 19. True, Israel was upheld and chosen by the Lord, and was His delight. However, the statements in verses 1b-4 suggest that here the Servant is the Messiah. This One has the Spirit of God on Him (cf.

11:2), and He will bring justice to the nations (cf. 9:7; 11:3-4; 16:5). He will be gentle (42:2-3a)—most people would break a weak, useless reed, but He will not do so—and He will be faithful (v. 3b) and not ... discouraged (v. 4). He gave the Law in which the islands (i.e., people in remote parts; cf. 41:1) will ... hope. Matthew 12:18-21 quotes Isaiah 42:1-4 with some minor variations, relating it to Jesus and His ministry in Israel. As God's Servant, Jesus did what Israel could never do. He perfectly carried out the will of the Father so that people everywhere may believe in the Holy One of Israel.

- **42:5-7.** The LORD promised to assist the Servant in His mission, which God can do because He is the Creator (cf. 40:12-14, 26). He created the immense heavens and the earth (cf. 44:24; 45:12, 18; 48:13; 51:13, 16) and life in it, including man, giving him breath. Speaking to His Servant (42:6-7) God assured Him that He had been called to perform the will of God. To be called ... in righteousness (as Cyrus also would be, 41:2), meant to be responsible to do God's righteous will. Of course the Messiah, unlike Cyrus, lived a righteous life (for He is God). Because the LORD would take hold of the Servant's hand the Messiah would have the power to carry out God's will.
- Also the Servant was assured that He would be a covenant for the people (cf. 49:8). He would fulfill God's covenant promises to Israel, and would also be a light (cf. 42:16; Luke 1:79) for the Gentiles (cf. Isa. 49:6). Spiritually unredeemed Israel and the Gentiles are blind, and they are captives ... in darkness. Though Cyrus would be the servant to release Jewish captives from exile, the Messiah gives spiritual release (cf. 61:1; John 8:32; Col. 1:13), sight (cf. John 9:39-41), and light (cf. John 8:12) to those who trust Him. (On eyes being opened; cf. Isa. 32:3; 35:5.) This spiritual salvation to both Jews and Gentiles will eventuate in the glorious messianic kingdom.
- **42:8-9.** The LORD, Israel's covenant-keeping God, had given the prophecy recorded in verses 6-7 and He will not let idols take credit for it (cf. comments on 41:21-24). In view of all that God had already done for Israel (the former things) these new things (cf. 48:6) of which He had been speaking would certainly happen. No other god can foretell such things. If, as some scholars argue, someone other than Isaiah wrote chapters 40-66 after the Jewish captives were released by Cyrus, then Isaiah's point in 42:9 and elsewhere is destroyed. Isaiah was affirming that God, unlike idols, can tell the future. And this divine ability adds to His glory (v. 8).
- **42:10-17.** People everywhere (in the ends of earth; cf. 41:5 and see comments on 5:26) should sing this song of praise to the LORD. These should include (a) people who make their living by sea commerce, (b) those who live in the islands (cf. 41:1, 5), and (c) those in the desert regions and towns. Kedar (cf. 21:16-17) is an area in Northern Arabia, and Sela was a city in Edom. People everywhere should sing and shout. ... to the LORD because of His victory over His enemies at the Messiah's second coming.
- God, seemingly silent for a long time, will act in judgment though, humanly speaking, it will be painful for Him (42:14). He will dry up the places where people do not revere Him (v. 15). But He will guide those who trust in Him, giving them light (cf. v. 7) and smoothing their paths (v. 16). However, pagans who trust in idols will be ashamed (v. 17; cf. 44:9, 11; 45:16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "Beholding" is an interesting idea. We wouldn't typically use this word to describe an activity. What are some of the other words commonly used to describe beholding something or someone? What are some things we behold that may compete with our beholding Jesus?
2. What is a messiah and what is the apparent connection between the titles "messiah" and "servant?"

3. What was the covenant promise of God to his people that Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilled?

4. In your relationship with people, have you ever crossed the line between servant and messiah? What would that even look like?

5. If the Lord were to speak to you in a dream tonight that he wanted you to “sing a brand-new song,” what would that mean to you? What would you do? How might this “new song” change your life?