



ISAIAH 49

THE LORD’S SPECIAL SERVANT ~ GOD’S FAITHFULNESS ~ GOD WILL NOT FORGET ZION

Isaiah Chapters 49, 50 and 51 contain especially strong messages of encouragement and hope and could actually be titled “Poems of Hope,” Throughout Isaiah there are intense messages of hope amid all the tribulations and failures. In these encouragements, Isaiah looks beyond his time to the coming of the Christ, and even beyond that to the second coming and the eternal kingdom.

So, it’s pretty clear, the Messiah is revealed in Isaiah 49...big time! In fact, most of this chapter of Isaiah is a poetic picture being painted of the Messiah. Technically, it can be broke down this way: Jesus speaks to the nations (1-6), God speaks to Jesus (7-8), and Jesus speaks to Zion and all nations (9-26).

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 49:1 Listen to me, all you in distant lands! Pay attention, you who are far away! The LORD called me before my birth; from within the womb he called me by name. ² He made my words of judgment as sharp as a sword. He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand. I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver.</p> <p>³ He said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, and you will bring me glory.”</p> <p>⁴ I replied, “But my work seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose. Yet I leave it all in the LORD’s hand; I will trust God for my reward.”</p> <p>⁵ And now the LORD speaks— the one who formed me in my mother’s womb to be his servant, who commissioned me to bring Israel back to him. The LORD has honored me, and my God has given me strength. ⁶ He says, “You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”</p>	<p>a 49:2 Or “He makes my mouth a sharp sword.” See Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15.</p> <p>b 49:2 Jesus was “hidden” in Nazareth for thirty years.</p> <p>c 49:3 See Gen. 32:28; Deut. 7:6; 26:18, 19; Eph. 1:4–6.</p> <p>d 49:4 Or “empty breath.”</p> <p>e 49:6 Although Israel is named in this chapter, the future fulfillment is found in Jesus Christ, the true Servant of the Lord. He was called and named from the womb (v. 1 and Matt. 1:20–23). He was equipped and prepared by God (v. 2). He was appointed and commissioned as God’s Servant (v. 3). He brings Israel back to God (v. 5). He is highly favored in the sight of God (v. 5). Jesus found all his strength in his Father and did only what pleased him (v. 5 and John 5:19). He is light and salvation to nations (gentiles, v. 6).</p>	<p>The Lord’s Special Servant</p> <p>Isaiah 49:1 Listen to what I have to say, you islands. Pay attention to me, you who live in distant lands. Yahweh called me as his own before I was born and named me while I was still in my mother’s womb. ² He gives me words that pierce and penetrate. a He hid me and protected me in the shadow of his hand. b He prepared me like a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.</p> <p>³ And he said to me, “Israel, you are my special servant; in you I will be glorified.” c</p> <p>⁴ I said, “I’ve worked and served for nothing. I have used up all my strength for nothing.” d Yet my rights I leave in Yahweh’s hands, and my just reward is with my God. ⁵ And now, the Lord Yahweh—who shaped me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob’s tribes back to him that Israel would be gathered back to himself, for I am honored in the sight of Yahweh. I find the source of all my strength in my God—⁶ who says: “Is it too small a thing for you, my servant, to restore greatness to Jacob’s tribes and the survivors of Israel? I will make you to be a light to the nations and to bring the light of my salvation to the ends of the earth!” e</p>

⁷ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: “Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

⁸ Thus says the LORD: “In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, ⁹ saying to the prisoners, ‘Come out,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’ They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; ¹⁰ they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. ¹¹ And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. ¹² Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene.”

¹³ Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

¹⁴ But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.”

¹⁵ “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me. ¹⁷ Your builders make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste go out from you.

¹⁸ Lift up your eyes around and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, declares the LORD, you shall put them all on as an ornament; you shall bind them on as a bride does.

¹⁹ “Surely your waste and your desolate places and your devastated land— surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away. ²⁰ The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: ‘The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.’

f 49:8 This may be a reference to the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8–13). Believers today are now living in that season of God’s favor. See Luke 4:18–19.

g 49:10 See Rev. 7:16.

h 49:10 See Ps. 23:1–3.

i 49:12 There is much scholarly debate about the land of Sinim. There are some convincing arguments that link Sinim etymologically and historically to the Qin dynasty, which eventually grew and became modern-day China. The Sinites as a people group are mentioned in Gen. 10:17 and 1 Chron. 1:15. Others see Sinim as a Persian province, a variant name for Phoenicia, or a region in Aswan (Egypt).

j 49:13 The Hebrew word for “compassion” is racham, a Hebrew homophone for “womb.” The implication is that God has a compassionate love for you, greater than a birth mother has for her child. God’s love comes from deep within his innermost being and births living mercy poured out over us. Racham can be translated “pity, grace, favor, tender affection, or compassion.” The very core of God’s being is filled with love and compassion for you.

k 49:16 Although this is an apparent reference to the walls of Jerusalem, there is an application for each of us. Wherever you are today, your limitations, your walls, are before God’s eyes. He knows where you are and what you face.

l 49:17 The Hebrew root word for “children” (bnyk) is a homonym for “builders.” This translation includes both terms. See also v. 18.

m 49:18 The Hebrew word for “bride” (kallah) also means “completed, perfected, or finished.” A mature bride will arise, wearing her sons and daughters as her jewelry and crown. See 1 Thess. 2:19.

n 49:20 Or “the children of your bereavement.”

⁷ Yahweh, Israel’s Kinsman-Redeemer and Holy One, says to the one who is deeply despised and repulsed by rulers and a slave to the ruling class: “Kings will see and stand up in respect; “princes will bow down to honor the faithfulness of Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

God’s Faithfulness

⁸ Yahweh says: “When the time of showing you favor has come, **f** I will answer your heart’s cry. I will help you in the day of salvation, for I have fixed my eyes on you. I have made you a covenant people to restore the land and to resettle families on forgotten inheritances. ⁹ You will declare to prisoners, ‘You’re free!’ and to those in darkness, ‘Step out into the light!’ They will be like sheep that graze beside the roads and find pasture on the barren hillside. ¹⁰ They will never be hungry or thirsty. **g** Neither scorching sun nor desert wind will hurt them, for he, the Loving One, will guide them and lead them to restful, renewing streams of water. **h** ¹¹ I will level all my mountains as a road for them and raise up my highways. ¹² Look! They will come from faraway lands—some from the north, some from the west, and some from the land of Sinim.” **i**

¹³ Sing for joy, you heavens! Shout, you earth, and rejoice with dancing, shouting, and glee! Burst into joyous songs, you mountains, for Yahweh has comforted his beloved people. He will show tenderness and compassion **j** to his suffering ones.

God Will Not Forget Zion

¹⁴ But Zion has said, “Yahweh has forsaken me. My Lord has forgotten me—I’m all alone.

¹⁵ Yahweh responds, “But how could a loving mother forget her nursing child and not deeply love the one she bore? Even if a there is a mother who forgets her child, I could never, no never, forget you. ¹⁶ Can’t you see? I have carved your name on the palms of my hands! Your walls are always my concern. **k** ¹⁷ Your children, your builders, **l** are running back to you as those who ruined and destroyed you are running away.

¹⁸ Lift up your head and look all around you. See! All your children, your builders, gather to come back to you. As surely as I live, I make this promise,” says Yahweh. “You will wear them all like jewels, as a radiant bride **m** wears her beautiful jewelry!

¹⁹ “See? Your ruins and devastated places will soon be overcrowded with settlers while your destroyers stay far away. ²⁰ You thought you had lost the children, **n** but you will hear them say, ‘This place is too cramped for me. Make more room for me to live in.’

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Translation (TPT)	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>21 Then you will say in your heart: ‘Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?’”</p> <p>22 Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. 23 Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.”</p> <p>24 Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? 25 For thus says the LORD: “Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children. 26 I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”</p>	<p>o 49:22 Or “lap, bosom.”</p> <p>p 49:23 Or “whoever waits on me.”</p> <p>q 49:24 Or “tyrant.” The Hebrew reads “a righteous one.”</p> <p>r 49:25 See Gen. 12:1–3.</p> <p>s 49:26 Or “I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh,” a figure of speech for violently turning on one another.</p> <p>t 49:26 Or “They will get drunk on their own blood as with wine.” See Rev. 16:6.</p>	<p>21 And you will say to yourself, ‘Where in the world did all these children come from? Who birthed these for me? I thought I was bereaved “and barren. I thought I was all alone, forgotten in exile—so how did they all get here?’”</p> <p>22 This is what Lord Yahweh says: “Soon I will raise my hand and signal to the nations, and they will come with your little boys bundled in their arms o and your little daughters carried on their shoulders. 23 Kings will be their babysitters and queens their nursing mothers. With faces bowed to the ground, they will lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am Yahweh, and I will never disappoint those who entwine p their hearts with mine.”</p> <p>24 Who can snatch the prey from the hands of a mighty warrior or rescue captives from a conqueror?” q 25 But Yahweh says: “The prey will be freed from the mighty warrior and captives will be rescued from a conqueror! For I will fight with those who fight with you, r and I myself will save your children. 26 I will cause the violence of your oppressors to come back upon them, s and your enemies will kill one another in a killing frenzy! t Then all the earth will know that I am Yahweh, your Savior, your Kinsman-Redeemer, the mighty hero of Jacob’s tribes.</p>

Bible Knowledge Commentary

JOHN A. MARTIN

- THE SERVANT TO BE REJECTED (CHAP. 49-50)

- The Servant’s mission (49:1-13)

- The Servant’s ministry to the Gentiles (49:1-6).

- **49:1-3.** God’s Servant (vv. 3, 5-6) is the speaker in verses 1-5; God addressed Him in verse 6. Like the LORD, He called on the islands (see comments on 41:1) and the nations to listen (see comments on 46:3) to Him because of His special “calling” from the Lord. His mouth was like a sharpened sword, that is, it was a weapon to destroy the disobedient (cf. 1:20; also note Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 19:15). He was also likened to a sharp arrow. The Servant was to display God’s splendor (Isa. 49:3; cf. 60:21; 61:3). Why is the Servant here called Israel? This cannot refer to the nation because the Servant is to draw that nation back to God. The Messiah is called Israel because He fulfills what Israel should have done. In His person and work He epitomizes the nation.
- **49:4.** The Servant saw little visible reward for His service. No change was evident in the nation by which the Servant could claim He had accomplished what He set out to do (cf. John 1:11). However, this did not bother Him for He trusted that in due time God would reward Him.

- **49:5-6.** Formed ... in the womb as God's Servant (cf. v. 1), the Messiah's commission is to restore Jacob and Israel (see comments on 40:27) to the LORD. With God as His strength, He would also be a light for the Gentiles (cf. 42:6; Luke 1:79) so that salvation from the Lord would extend to people in the ends of the earth (see comments on Isa. 5:26).
- **The Lord's Promise to the Servant.**
- **49:7.** The LORD assured the Servant—despised and abhorred by His people—that He would succeed in His ministry to the Gentiles. Kings and princes will bow down to Him because He has been chosen by the LORD. In His first coming Jesus Christ was rejected by His own people (John 1:10-11), but at His [Vol. 1, p. 1104] second coming all will bow before Him (Phil. 2:10-11).
- **Israel's Restoration.**
- **49:8-12.** In the Millennium, here called the time of God's favor and the day of salvation, the Lord will enable the Servant to be a covenant for the people (cf. 42:6; i.e., to fulfill God's covenant promises to Israel; see comments on Jer. 31:31-34 on the New Covenant). When the land is restored the captives will return to the Promised Land from various places around the world (Isa. 49:9; cf. v. 12). The land will be fertile with pasture (v. 9) and water (v. 10) and mountains and valleys will be changed (v. 11). As in 40:3-4, this may signify a change in the people's lives. The location of Sinim is uncertain, but many think it is the Aswan region of Egypt (NIV marg.).
- **The Prophet's Response.**
- **49:13.** As the prophet spoke, he called on nature, personified, to rejoice (on the mountains rejoicing see 44:23). The reason for rejoicing is that the LORD comforts and has compassion (cf. 49:10) on those who need help, including Gentiles.
- **Israel assured of the return (49:14-26)**
- **49:14-16.** In verses 14-21 the prophet recorded a dialogue between Israel and God. Zion (i.e., the people in Jerusalem) felt as if God had forgotten her (v. 14). But God replied that He certainly had not forgotten Israel. He could not possibly do so because He is like a mother to the nation. Furthermore, the nation was inscribed, as it were, on His palms. Therefore whenever He, figuratively speaking, lifts up His hands He sees the nation's name which reminds Him of her.
 - **49:17-21.** Judah's captors will depart (v. 17) and be far away (v. 19) and Judah's sons will begin to return (vv. 17-18). This will brighten up the nation as a bride enjoys ornaments. This return will be so great that the land (personified by you and your, vv. 19-21) will not be large enough for all the inhabitants, called its children. But when the people returned from the Babylonian Captivity they were a comparatively small, struggling band. The return mentioned in verses 19-21 seems to be much larger and therefore probably refers to Israel's return at the beginning of the Millennium.
 - **49:22-26.** When Israel returns to the land in the future the Gentiles will worship before the LORD and will be friendly toward Israel. In fact the Gentiles will even help transport Israelites to Palestine. Gentile leaders will be subservient to Israel, which will cause her to realize that the LORD really is in control of the world (v. 23). It is unusual for captives to be rescued, but God will see that it is done for Israel. Israel's enemies will be destroyed, which will cause the whole world to acknowledge that the LORD is Israel's God and her Savior (cf. comments on 42:11), Redeemer (cf. comments on 41:14), and the Mighty One of Jacob (cf. 60:16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Jesus is referred to as “Israel” in verse 3? What would a Jewish rabbi have thought of verse 3?

2. Make a list the things Jesus says about himself in verses 1-6 that actually happened to him while he was walking on the earth.

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3. If someone were to ask you, “What was the message of hope that Jesus brought to the world?” what would you tell them? When you find yourself speaking “hope” into people’s lives, what is it that you are saying to them? In other words, what does **you** speaking hope sound like?

4. Why is **hope** important to God? What does the Lord use it for? What does **hope** accomplish in people’s lives?

5. In what areas of your life do you consistently need “hope?” When you do receive hope for these areas, what changes in your heart? Today, if you had a “33 gallon bag of hope” to give to someone, who would you give it to and why?