

• *Who can rescue both Israel and the Gentiles?*

• *A 'Servant' – Jesus*

1. Could the Servant of the Lord be a human godly servant of God?

2. Yet the Servant of the Lord is obviously a human being

• *Not an angel*

• *The Servant is upheld by God and has the power of the Holy Spirit*

• *He works in confident faith, not self-commendation*

• *He sustains and encourages*

• *He will persevere until nations are transformed*

There is great encouragement for Israel¹; and there is great encouragement for the gentiles. Idols and idolaters will fail but God can do what the idols cannot do². However, the question might be asked: is there anyone capable of being used by God to achieve his purpose? Who can be sufficient for so mighty a task as rescuing Israel and the gentiles at one and the same time? The answer is: God has in mind a Servant who can do it. Who is this 'Servant'? Any Christian will surely know that it is the Lord Jesus Christ, but let us approach the matter as if we did not know!

1. **Could the Servant of the Lord be a human godly servant of God?** Could it be Isaiah himself (he was called 'servant' in 20:3) or someone like Eliakim or David?¹ Or could it be the nation of Israel?² Surely none of these is possible. The task of rescuing Israel and the gentiles at one and the same time is surely too great. And the nation of Israel is the rescued, not the Rescuer.

2. **Yet the Servant of the Lord is obviously a human being.** Isaiah is not describing an angel of any kind. He proceeds to describe an amazingly faithful Saviour.

¹*'See my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom my soul delights;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.
²He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.'*

The 'Servant' is weak in himself, yet is upheld by God. He is God's chosen instrument for achieving salvation. He has the power of the Holy Spirit, and he brings God's saving righteousness to the entire world. God's Servant is not interested in showmanship or self-advertising. His work is done in confident faith, not in violent self-commendation.

³*'A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
⁴he will not lose hope or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his teaching the distant lands will put their hope.'*

The 'Servant' is a sustainer and an encourager. The weakest of the weak do not break under his care. And he himself does not suffer from discouragement to the extent of abandoning the ministry that he has from God. (This does not sound like Cyrus!) He will persevere until the entire world is reached, until his gospel is sufficiently successful as to transform nations.

¹ 40:1-41:20

² 41:21-29

¹ see 22:20; 37:35
² see 41:8, 9

3. Isaiah goes on to describe the Servant's call

- Behind the servant is the call of God

- He protects the Servant

- The Servant embodies God's covenant and will end all blindness and bondage

- Yahweh is the One and only Saviour

- He has fulfilled His promises

- Isaiah calls the world to worship the Saviour

- Even traditional enemies of God may rejoice in the coming salvation

3. Isaiah goes on to describe the Servant's call.

⁵*This is what Yahweh God 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:*

⁶*'I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness, in order to take hold of your hand.'*

God speaks as the Creator of the world and Sustainer of all life^{□1}. Behind the Servant is the call of God^{□2}. In his Servant, he acts in order to be righteous himself, to steer history in accordance with his own righteousness, and to bring righteousness into the lives of others. He protects the Servant.

I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the gentiles, ⁷to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.'

The Servant will in himself be the embodiment of a covenant which God will make with his worldwide people. He will end every kind of blindness and bondage.

⁸*'I am Yahweh; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.*

⁹*See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.'*

Yahweh is the One and only Saviour, with his own character, that is shared with no other God. The 'former things' that he promised (the defeat of Assyria, the coming of Cyrus) were all fulfilled. There are 'new things' to come through his Servant.

In the light of such a promise what can one do except sing songs of worship? Isaiah calls upon the world to worship such a Saviour.

¹⁰*Sing to Yahweh a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you distant lands, and all who live in them.*

¹¹*Let the open country and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives [Arabia] rejoice. Let the people of Sela [Edom] sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops.*

¹²*Let them give glory to Yahweh and proclaim his praise in the islands.*

Even traditional enemies of God (Arabians, Edomites) may rejoice in this coming salvation. God will act like a mighty warrior to save his people.

□1 42:5

□2 42:6

• He will give a shout of war as He defeats sin

¹³ *Yahweh will march out like a warrior, like a man of war he will stir up his zeal. He will shout! Yes, he will raise the battle cry and will show how mighty he is.*

Although he will not shout in self-advertisement^{□1}, he will give a shout of war as he defeats sin.

□1 42:2

• Salvation has been slow in coming – like the wait for a child to be born

¹⁴ *‘From eternity I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, all at once I cry out, I gasp and pant.’*

Salvation has been slow in coming. God has been like a wife enduring a long wait for a child to be born. But one day, the event arrives!

• Destruction of the old world is part of the coming salvation

¹⁵ *‘I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools.’*

The destruction of the old world is part of the coming salvation.

• The old world will end and a new world will begin

¹⁶ *‘I will lead the blind by a road they have not known, along paths they have not known I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth.*

These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

• God’s people will experience His faithfulness and idolatry will face its final humiliation

¹⁷ *But those who trust in idols, who say to images, “You are our gods,” will be turned back in utter shame.’*

The old, wicked world will end^{□1}. A new world will come into being. Blindness will come to an end. A new road will be walked. God’s people will experience his faithfulness to the uttermost. Idolatry will face its final humiliation.

□1 42:15



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