

## Isaiah Lesson 14 Articles

The Servant addresses the nations that did not know Israel's God. The Gentiles were "far off," and only God's Servant could bring them near (Eph. 2:11–22). Christ confirmed God's promises to the Jews and also extended God's grace to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:8–12). In this message, God's Servant explains His ministry as bringing light in the darkness (Isa. 49:1–7), liberty to the captives (vv. 8–13), and love and hope to the discouraged (49:14–50:3).

*Light in the darkness (49:1–7).* What right did God's Servant have to address the Gentile nations with such authority? From before His birth, He was called by God to His ministry (Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15); and God prepared Him like a sharp sword and a polished arrow (Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16). Messiah came as both a Servant and a Warrior, serving those who trust Him and ultimately judging those who resist Him. All of God's servants should be like prepared weapons. "It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus," wrote Robert Murray McCheyne. "A holy minister [servant] is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

The Jewish nation was called to glorify God and be a light to the Gentiles, but they failed in their mission. This is why Messiah is called "Israel" in Isaiah 49:3: He did the work that Israel was supposed to do. Today, the church is God's light in this dark world (Acts 13:46–49; Matt. 5:14–16), and like Israel, we seem to be failing in our mission to take the Good News to the ends of the earth. We cannot do the job very effectively when only 5 percent of the average local church budget is devoted to evangelism!

As Jesus Christ ministered on earth, especially to His own people Israel, there were times when His work seemed in vain (Isa. 49:4). The religious leaders opposed Him, the disciples did not always understand Him, and those He helped did not always thank Him. He lived and labored by faith, and God gave Him success.

Our Lord could not minister to the Gentiles until first He ministered to the Jews (vv. 5–6). Read carefully Matthew 10:5–6; 15:24; Luke 24:44–49; Acts 3:25–26; 13:46–47; and Romans 1:16. When our Lord returned to heaven, He left behind a believing remnant of Jews that carried on His work. We must never forget that "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). The Bible is a Jewish book, the first believers and missionaries were Jews, and the Gentiles would not have heard the Gospel had it not been brought to them by Jews. Messiah was despised by both Jews and Gentiles (Isa. 49:7), but He did God's work and was glorified (Phil. 2:1–11).

*Liberty to the captives (Isa. 49:8–13).* Not only is God's Servant the "new Israel," but He is also the "new Moses" in setting His people free. Jesus Christ is God's covenant (42:6), so we can be sure that God will keep His promises. Moses led the nation out of bondage in Egypt, and God will lead His people out of Captivity in Babylon. Joshua led the people into their land so they could claim their inheritance, and God will bring them back to their land "to reassess its desolate inheritances" (49:8, NIV).

How does this apply to the Gentiles? If God had not restored the people, the city, and the temple, He could not have fulfilled His promises concerning the Messiah. Had there been no Bethlehem, where would He have been born? Had there been no Nazareth, where would He have grown up? Had there been no Jerusalem and no temple, where would He have taught, suffered, and died? *And He did this for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews.*

Verses 10–12 look beyond the deliverance from Babylon in 536 B.C. toward the future glorious kingdom. The Lord will call the Jewish people from the ends of the earth and gather them again in their land (Isa. 14:1–3; 35:6; 40:11; 43:19).

*Love and hope to the discouraged (Isa. 49:14–50:3).* "The Lord comforts His people and will have compassion on His afflicted ones" (49:13, NIV). So sing the people of God as they contemplate their future deliverance, but the people of the Captivity and those left in "the desolate inheritances" are not so happy. Instead of singing, they are complaining: "The Lord has forsaken me. And my Lord has forgotten me" (v. 14, NKJV).

The Lord assures them of His love by comparing Himself to a compassionate mother (vv. 14–23), a courageous warrior (vv. 24–26), and a constant lover (50:1–3).

*(1) A compassionate mother (vv. 14–23).* The Bible emphasizes the fatherhood of God, but there is also a "motherhood" side to God's nature that we must not forget. God is compassionate and comforts us as a mother comforts her children (66:13). Isaiah pictures Israel as a nursing child, totally dependent on the Lord who will never forget them or forsake them. The high priest bore the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders and over his heart (Ex. 28:6–9), engraved on jewels; but God has engraved His children's names on His hands. The word "engraved" means "to cut into," signifying its permanence. God can never forget Zion or Zion's children.

Zion seems like a forsaken and barren mother, but she will be so blessed of God that there will be no room for her children! They will be like beautiful bridal ornaments, not decrepit refugees from Captivity. Once again, the prophet looked ahead to the end of the age when the Gentiles will honor Jehovah and Israel, and kings and queens will be baby-sitters for Israel's children!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (pp. 120–124). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.