

1st Servant Song of Isaiah – Part 1

Starting today, there is only a single church service. Even when we vacate this facility, I will continue teaching live on Facebook and then recorded to mp3 on springvalleybiblechurch.org and on YouTube.

The temptation of Jesus has sometimes caused me to ask various questions as to why? The study of Isaiah in conjunction with the angelic conflict may resolve this question.

Here is an overview. Let me tell you what I am going to tell you before I tell you.

While preparing the lesson, I started with the thought that I would just go through the first Servant Song and complete it in one lesson.

But, after doing some research, I realized that Isaiah 42:1 is quoted or referred to a couple of times in the New Testament. If Isaiah 42:1-9, the prophecy included in the first servant song is pulled into the New Testament, we need to understand how the gospel writers understood this. And there is some insight by D. A. Carson which was an eye-opener for me. By quoting from Isaiah, Matthew is bringing in the context from Isaiah. That context is the angelic conflict, in particular the appeal trial of Satan. If God is presenting His solution to the angelic conflict in the Messiah, Satan as a defense attorney has a right to examine the prosecutions exhibit #1, Jesus Christ.

The tempting of Jesus by Satan immediately follows the baptism of Jesus, the presenting of Jesus as the Messiah and the approval of Jesus by God the Father. Matthew 4:1-11 contains a narrative of this testing.

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit (Mark says the Holy Spirit impelled or threw

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him into the wilderness) **into the wilderness to be tempted** (infinitive indicates purpose) **by the devil.**

Matthew 4:2 And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

Matthew 4:3 And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”

Matthew 4:5 Then the devil *took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

Matthew 4:6 and *said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”

Matthew 4:7 Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

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Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil *took Him to a very high mountain and *showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

Matthew 4:9 and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”

Matthew 4:10 Then Jesus *said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’”

Matthew 4:11 Then the devil *left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

This passage, when I read it in the past, left me with several questions.

1. Why did God let Satan tempt the humanity of Jesus in this way?
2. Why did Satan want to tempt the humanity of Jesus in this way?
3. Why were these temptations presented to the humanity of Jesus at this time? What is the context for this? What was the purpose, what did this accomplish?

A suggested answer came out of study of Isaiah 42:1 and following. I started with Isaiah 42:1 and found it quoted in the book of Matthew which ended up suggesting an answer for my questions.

Perhaps an illustration from the artistic world might help understand what I am trying to convey.

Have you ever seen an Impressionist painting which uses the “pointillism” technique? Small dots of paint are used to form images. If

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you stand very close to the painting, only the dots appear to the eye. The objects in the painting are not perceived. Step back from the painting and the image is visible.

So here when looking at the book of Matthew, if we look just at the individual words and sentence and do not bring in the context of the Bible, the beautiful tapestry of Jesus' mission might be missed. In particular, the quotes from the Old Testament bring in a context from its source that mixes with the context of the place in the New Testament where the quote is located.

So much for the overview.

Introductory comments.

Today the lesson will include the first of the Servant Songs from Isaiah. At least part of the first song.

The identification and nomenclature of these “songs” is not inspired. Actually, it was started by someone who believed these songs were written by someone other than Isaiah. In this case, those that believed that, are pointing to something they don't understand but which Christians can benefit from if they understand. The text is inspired and inerrant. But the constant question is, “what does it mean?” There is something in these “poems” that is important to note. The “servant” points to Jesus Christ, both in the 1st Advent and the 2nd Advent.

As I will continue to say, it is important when reading this portion of Isaiah that the reader understand 1) prophecy, 2) the angelic conflict and 3) dispensations.

Prophecy. This portion of Isaiah contains information about the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the Millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is future to Isaiah. It is prophecy, some of which has now been fulfilled

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by Jesus in His 1st Advent and some which is yet to be fulfilled during the 2nd Advent.

Angelic Conflict. Starting in Isaiah chapter 40, Isaiah is standing in the heavenly court as part of the Appeal Trial of Satan. This is the angelic conflict on display. But, remember, this was originally written for a Hebrew audience. It is not a theological, categorical essay. It is a show and tell about Jesus Christ. The Hebrews needed to see and hear. There is no introduction that says, “Now we are in heaven with Isaiah attending a court scene with God and His angels on one side and Satan and the cosmos diabolicus on the other.” The court/legal language used and the context within the Bible tells us this.

Dispensations. The Church Age is not revealed in the Old Testament which includes the book of Isaiah. It does include information about the dispensation of the Law or Jewish Age which includes the Tribulation/Jacob’s Troubles as well as the future dispensation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth that we call the Millennium. It also includes the Gospels. They occurred in the dispensation of the Law. The gospel writers included many quotes from the Old Testament that fall into the realm of prophecy.

There are some additional preliminary remarks on Isaiah that need to be stated before proceeding.

Here is a comment from Goldingay that is at the same time perceptive and yet incomplete. It is incomplete because he does not appear to understand the Angelic Conflict with the inclusion of the appeal trial of Satan.

“Verses 1-4 comprise a presentation of Yhwh's servant. His activity is future, but he is already available to be presented. To whom? Out of its context the answer might well be that he is being presented to the

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heavenly court or to the prophet. In the context of 41.21-29 he is more likely being presented to an earthly assembly of the elders. Yet the court scene presupposes the presence of the gods who have been summoned for the debate. In this sense the servant is indeed being presented to the gods, and the prophet is part of the court scene.”

He seems to waffle. Yes it is a court scene in heaven but presented to an earthly assembly of elders (who are not actually in attendance but will have the message made available through Isaiah) and certainly to “the gods.” It is in heaven with Isaiah standing in attendance watching and hearing God hold court with the angelic beings present, among whom are the representatives of the cosmos diabolicus.

Since this first servant song is quoted in the book of Matthew, there is another commentator that provides some useful information to understand the link between Isaiah 42 and Matthew’s use of Isaiah.

D. A. Carson says (breaking into a sentence), “...when the NT quotes a brief OT passage, it often refers implicitly to the entire context of the quotation. This is very likely here (this quote is from comments on chapter 8 not chapter 12, but it applies here as well), for Matthew has a profound understanding of the OT.” I found this insight to be very helpful in connecting Isaiah 42:1-9 and Matthew 12:15-21 where Matthew quotes the Isaiah passage. I got goose bumps all over my body when I realized that Matthew had linked Isaiah 42 to Jesus’ baptism and subsequent tempting by the devil.

In order to get to Isaiah chapter 42, let us review some of what has been presented previously starting in chapter 40. I am picking up from chapter 41:

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Verses Event

- 1-2 Call Court to Order
- 3-4 God's Argument for Himself
- 5-6 God's Argument Against the Adversaries
- 7-10 God's Argument for His Client (Israel)
- 11-20 God's Argument to His Client to not fear
- 21-29 God's Challenge to the Adversary to Present Case

Now, in the first servant song, God presents His solution to the mess that Satan made.

Presentation of the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 42:1-9)

Per Duane Lindsey (from his book "A Study in Isaiah The Servant Songs.")

"Yahweh is the Speaker throughout the poem." He outlines this poem as follows (paraphrased):

Verses 1-4: Addressed to all mankind (at least to those who are reading/hearing this poem). This constitutes Yahweh's designatory call of and promised accomplishments by His Servant.

Verses 5-7: Addressed to His Servant as a promise of the divine empowerment needed for the accomplishment of His task.

Verses 8-9: Addressed to Yahweh's people in exile. His self-predication based on fulfilled prophecy.

**Isaiah 42:1 (NASB 1994) "Behold, My Servant,
whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My
soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations.**

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Isaiah 42:1 (YLT) Lo, My servant, I take hold on him, My chosen one -- My soul hath accepted, I have put My Spirit upon him, Judgment to nations he bringeth forth. (This is a very literal translation that is a bit difficult to read).

Isaiah 42:1 (Lindsey) Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. (DTS professor, retired. More readable.)

Behold. “Look” or even “here” is better than “behold.” In today’s culture, it communicates better. It is a call to attention. A similar word in Arabic means “here.” As I have said on another occasion, sometimes it is useful to translate a Hebrew word with two or more English words to get the full intent and emphasis of the Hebrew. Perhaps to emphasize this, one might translate this word as “Look! Here!” Or, if you are from the South, you might say, “Now, lookie here!” It serves to break from the previous topic of challenging the adversary’s arguments to presenting God’s solution.

My Servant. It is God the Father talking here. His Servant is being appointed by Him. From other passages we know this is God the Son incarnate who is being appointed for the 1st Advent and subsequent 2nd Advent.

I uphold. NASB has note “hold fast.”

My sense is something more than just support or even validation. I get the sense that this includes preserve, defend, keep. We need one of our

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two or three word translations of this word. How about, “I securely hold.”

My chosen one. That is what it means. Jesus is the chosen one.

In Hebrew poetry, there are often two lines that are parallel. This sets words in the first line in opposition or in parallel to the words in the second line.

Here is a more in-depth explanation of how the lines in Hebrew poetry relate to each other. In this context, a “colon” is a clause in a line of Hebrew poetry.

“The word 'parallelism' is misleading insofar as the second colon in a line usually does more than merely repeat the first. Rather it takes the thought further. Even individual words are rarely simply synonyms of words in the first colon. In general, by its nature the second colon strengthens, reinforces, and intensifies the point made in the first. It may do that by giving it more definition or by expanding it, by clarifying it or by explaining how it is so. Parallelism can work over several lines as well as between the cola in a line, again strengthening, reinforcing, intensifying, defining, expanding, clarifying, or explaining.” (Wenham p22)

Here, My servant is parallel to My chosen one. They are the same person. The second line amplifies the first.

At this point, a detour is needed because this verse or a portion of it are quoted more than once in the New Testament.

Most notable is the quote following the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and

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behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,

Matthew 3:17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

One commentator said that these verses are “universally” seen to refer to Isaiah 42:1.

This event is also included in Mark:

Mark 1:9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Mark 1:10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;

Mark 1:11 and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”

Also in Luke:

Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,

Luke 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice

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came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”

John comments on this event adding identity to it:

John 1:32 John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

John 1:33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’

John 1:34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

What happens immediately after the baptism of Jesus?

Luke is helpful here. In the verse immediately after Luke 3:22:

Luke 3:23 When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age...

There is a progression. First John the Baptist baptizes Jesus. Jesus is identified. He is presented as ready for His mission. God approves Him so He can start his 1st Advent mission which will generate the evidence against Satan. But Satan gets a chance to examine and test the evidence prior to Jesus embarking on His mission.

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Here are the gospel accounts of Isaiah 40:3 being quoted by John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:3	Mark 1:3	Luke 3:4-6	John 1:23
3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!’”	2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet : “Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way; 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.’”	4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet , “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight. 5 ‘Every ravine will be filled, And every mountain and hill will be brought low; The crooked will become straight, And the rough roads smooth; 6 And all flesh will see the salvation of God.’”	23 He said, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

Isaiah 40:3 is the announcement by the royal herald, John the Baptist. All four evangelists have this reference. This means it is an important milestone in the gospel message. Isaiah 42:1, the start of the presentation of the suffering servant is also referred to in all four gospels, although John explains it from a different perspective than the synoptic gospels.

Let us put this even in a chronological order, understanding that John the Baptist started the announcement of the 1st Advent. Remember, all four evangelists included the quote from Isaiah 40:3



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Matthew 3:6-17	Mark 1:9-11	Luke 3:21-22	John 1:23
<p>16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,</p> <p>17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”</p>	<p>9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.</p> <p>10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;</p> <p>11 and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”</p>	<p>21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,</p> <p>22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”</p>	<p>32 John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.</p> <p>33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’</p> <p>34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”</p>

Three of the gospel writers narrate the tempting of Jesus by Satan. This is an important milestone in Jesus’ ministry. Does He pass the tests that Satan throws at Him? And remember, Satan doesn’t test just because he can. He does it to try and make a point with God. Yet, each time it fails. A quote from the gospel of John is included. It does not narrate the event but merely quotes John the Baptist testimony of the result of that event which references the information in Isaiah 42:1.

Isaiah 42:1 says “my servant.” It is interesting to note that Job was “my servant” and immediately was tested by Satan. God gave Satan permission to test him.

Job 1:8 The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

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Do you see that word “My servant Job?” It is the same word used in Isaiah 42:1 “My servant.” So God points out His servant and invites Satan to test.

For Jesus, certainly Satan wants to try to trip Him up. Then the angelic conflict would be over. But I think there is a more profound effort on God’s part. God the Father is not worried that Satan will find Jesus and test Him. Rather, I think that God presented Jesus for the purpose of testing similar to His invitation to test Job. He presented the suffering servant, Jesus, as His solution to the angelic conflict. He has already approved Him. So, at the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry this test provides validation that Jesus is qualified for His mission. So I like the word “examine.” With his questions, Satan is going to examine the makeup of this servant. At the end of the examination, Jesus passes with a perfect score and with extra credit because He can banish Satan from His presence with a simple, “Go!”

I have made a table of these temptations. Only the fact of the temptations is included so as not to make the formatting difficult and take up a lot of paper. You can look up the complete temptation narratives yourself. I included a quote from the gospel of John which I think overtly accomplishes the same thing that the other gospels do. Humans have examined Jesus and came to the conclusion that He is the one that Moses and prophets wrote about, the Messiah, the Son of God. He is identified and qualified. That is the first milestone in Jesus’ ministry.

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Matthew 4:1+	Mark 1:12-13	Luke 3:21-22	John 1:41,45,49
1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.	12 Immediately the Spirit *impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. 13 And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.	12 Immediately the Spirit *impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. 13 And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.	41 He *found first his own brother Simon and *said to him, “We have found the Messiah ” (which translated means Christ). 45 Philip *found Nathanael and *said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote —Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” 49 Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel. ”

We know from these events who Jesus is and that He is qualified for the task before Him. It is almost as if the gospels function as part of the trial transcripts for the Appeal Trial of Satan.

Now, rather than continue with the rest of Isaiah 42, let us examine briefly the tests that Satan gives Jesus. I think they are revealing.

Matthew 4:3 And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”

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The “tempter” challenges Jesus’ ability to keep his physical human desires in check. Hunger can be a powerful motivator. It can make a “normal” person do some seemingly horrible things. Remember the airplane that crashed in the Andes mountains years ago (?1972)? Remember that the survivors were driven to cannibalism by their hunger. Here Jesus is focused on His spiritual mission and trusts God to provide. Jesus is in command of his physical body. The test is designed to see if Jesus will just trust God to provide. You may know of stories in which people who were hungry or in a dangerous situation just trusted God to provide. It is also interesting to note that the children of Israel were in the wilderness for 40 years. Their first test was hunger and thirst. They failed the test.

Matthew 4:5 Then the devil *took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

Matthew 4:6 and *said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”

Matthew 4:7 Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

The second test involves Jesus’ thinking. In addition, since Jesus answered the first test with quoting Scripture, the tempter here employs Scripture as part of his test. Jesus does not fear falling down. It also brings into play the temple/tabernacle the Law and how to conduct

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oneself trusting God. He does not need to demonstrate His command of the angelic realm in order to get off the top of the temple. Jesus passes the test again by observing that this test involves testing deity. Jesus would have to invoke His special status by throwing Himself down. Instead, as in the first test, He quotes Scripture and continues in faith.

Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil *took Him to a very high mountain and *showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

Matthew 4:9 and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”

Matthew 4:10 Then Jesus *said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’”

Matthew 4:11 Then the devil *left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

This test is the most interesting to me. It requires some thought. In short, Satan is offering Jesus rulership over all the earth if only He will worship him, Satan.

It is assumed by many that Satan once ruled over earth and caused havoc which caused God to subsequently “remodel” it in Genesis 1. He lost rulership over earth. Note what God’s command to Adam is:

Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

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To cultivate. This is the same root as serve or to be a slave or to be a servant. It can mean “work” as in this case to till or cultivate the garden.

To keep. The word can mean to keep, to preserve and to guard. This is under his control. He is guard and tiller of the garden but also the servant of God.

Then Satan tempts Adam through Eve.

**Genesis 3:4 The serpent said to the woman,
“You surely will not die!**

**Genesis 3:5 For God knows that in the day
you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and
you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”**

What was Satan’s challenge? “I will be like the Most High.” So Satan is suggesting that Adam and Eve will be like the Most High.

Now we know that Satan is the ruler of this world, currently. Part of Jesus’ mission will be to win it back for man. Satan suggests that Jesus could by-pass God’s 3-year plan and get it right now. All He has to do is worship Satan. This is tantamount to idolatry, something God detests. This was also a test that the sons of Israel failed in the desert—the golden calf episode. But Jesus stays with God’s plan. The Millennium Kingdom is a kingdom ruled by Jesus without Satan. He can do that because of the cross and resurrection.