

Who is Jesus?

Part 1: Jesus as Suffering Servant; Jesus and the Gentiles

Long before the incarnation, Isaiah had a series of prophetic revelations about a “suffering servant.” The servant has been identified variously with Israel, Isaiah himself and with a Messianic figure, the latter interpretation being the one supported by the New Testament reading of these passages. Indeed, given the witness of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection it is nearly impossible not to see Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies, whether or not he is the only fulfillment. Despite their distance from Jesus’ earthly life and ministry, these offer a unique insight into the mindset of the Servant.

1. Read Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-6, and 50:4-7.
 - a. Critically evaluate the theory that these prophecies find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.
 - b. What, if anything, do these tell you of the *personality* of the Servant? Do these match your impression of Jesus from the gospels? Do you find them a better fit for the portrait of Jesus in Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, or Revelation?

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Fun fact: In a survey of students, it was found that most view Jesus, using the Myers-Briggs personality type indicator, as an ESFJ, extrovert, sensing, feeling, judging. The study does not indicate whether it tried to correct for the possibility that the introverted students were at home, alone, and so didn’t take the survey [Susan H. Howell, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 32, 50-58 (2004)].

Be still and know that I am God,
be still and know that I am God,
be still and know that I am God.

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust,
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust,
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

Isaiah 42:1-4: The Servant, a Light to the Nations

42 Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Isaiah 49:1-6: The Servant's Mission

49 Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. 2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. 3 And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." 4 But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and

my reward with my God." 5 And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength— 6 he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Isaiah 50:4-7: The Servant's Humiliation and Vindication

4 The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher,[a] that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens— wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. 5 The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. 6 I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. 7 The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

Leader's Intro:

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Extra questions and observations:

1. ...