

ISAIAH'S TEACHING ABOUT THE LORD'S SERVANT (ISAIAH 42:1-9).

About the Lord's servant, Isaiah prophesized the following;

Isaiah prophesied that the Lord's servant would be the one anointed by the Lord himself and in whom God would be pleased.

He says that the servant will be guided by the Lord in his mission as the chosen one of God to serve on God's behalf.

He added that the Lord's servant would bring lasting justice to all nations and therefore establish peace in all nations.

Isaiah said that the Lord's servant would not shout or raise his voice or make laudy speeches on the streets. Neither would he break a bent reed nor put out a flickering lamp. He would therefore be a peaceful and humble servant (Isaiah 42:2-3).

The servant of the Lord would not lose hope or courage even when he is persecuted or opposed. He would endure suffering and contempt in his ministry and would never give up.

Through this servant God would make a covenant with all the people in the world. This would reflect God as a universal God.

He adds that the servant of the Lord would bring light to those who are in the blindness and darkness. He would open the eyes of the blind with the light of God and would set free those who are seated in darkness of the world.

Isaiah said that the Lord's servant would bring salvation not through the popular means by use of arms but through suffering for the majority.

The Lord's servant would be a devoted one, who would do his will as he would be asked by God himself. He would not be like the kings of Israel who defied God's instructions.

His mission would be a universal one because the law and light he intends to bring for mankind are universally given.

The Lord's servant would be strengthened by God so as to serve by God's power and God would be with him so that his service would be the service of God.

He would be the one filled with God's Spirit not to act on his own but by the Spirit from God.

The Lord's servant would bring justice to every nation most especially the lasting justice to be enjoyed by everybody.

He would be gentle, humble, obedient and encouraging that he would be loved by everybody for loving them.

He would instill hope and courage to those lacking it and to those thinking that they are tired and finished.

He would preach to distant nations about God and all nations would eagerly wait for him.

Through him God would speak directly to his people without other mediators because God's servant would be like God himself.

The Lord's servant would set free those in prisons, those suffering and comfort those that are troubled.

ISAIAH'S TEACHING ABOUT THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF GOD (ISAIAH 52:13-53:1-12).

Isaiah taught about the suffering servant addressing his teaching to an unidentified people who seem to represent mankind. Scholars have related this teaching to a future king reflected in the New Testament as Jesus Christ. So it included the following.

The suffering servant of the Lord would succeed in his task by being victorious and he would highly be honoured and appreciated by the people.

That his success and honour would amaze so many because he would triumph over his enemies who would also acknowledge that this was truly the servant of God.

That even though his enemies would acknowledge his status, it would not stop them from making him suffer because his suffering would be by God's plan.

Isaiah taught that the suffering servant would face a hard life during his ministry and he would be like a plant taking its root in the dry ground. (Isaiah 53:2).

He taught that with time, the suffering servant would be denied dignity and honour by the public to the extent of treating him as an ordinary man.

He taught that the suffering servant would completely ignored, with no one sparing time to look at him hence treating him like something worthless.

He taught that people would look at the suffering servant as a person suffering a punishment sent by God.

That the suffering servant would be beaten and wounded but mankind would be healed by those blows and punishments of the suffering servant.

That it would be hard to recognize him when his body is disfigured by his tormentors who would break down and shatter his body.

He adds that many nations will marvel at him and kings would be speechless with amazement on realising that he is the suffering servant of God. (Isaiah 52:15)

He says that the suffering servant was despised and finally rejected. However out of the rejection he received, he endured the suffering and pain that would have been for mankind.

He adds that the suffering servant would come and bring all God's people together as a flock of God. He would thus serve as a shepherd.

The suffering servant would suffer for the sins of others. He would be harshly treated but he would endure humbly. He would be like a lamb about to be slaughtered. He will not utter a single word.

That the suffering servant would be arrested and sentenced to death, however amidst that moment of pain, no one would plead for him and indeed died for the sins of mankind.

That the suffering servant would experience all of this pain on behalf of others and endure it all calmly like a lamb about to be slaughtered without uttering a single word.

That though innocent, the suffering servant would be sentenced to death, but no one would plead for him until his death.

He would be placed in the grave with evil men even though he was innocent, had not committed any crime neither did he tell any lie (Isaiah 53:9).

Isaiah holds that it was God's will that the suffering servant would suffer, then die as a sacrifice that would bring forgiveness to the rest of mankind. Therefore according to God, his suffering servant was to a in order to redeem mankind.

After suffering the suffering servant would live a life of joy again and this would justify that his death and suffering was not in vain.

After accomplishing his mission, God would give him a place of honour because willingly gave his life.

HOW THE PROPHECY OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT WAS FULFILLED IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus' birth is said to have pleased God almighty so much that the angels from heaven testified it, just as was the case when Isaiah reports about the coming of the suffering servant (Luke 2:14).

He was harshly beaten but he kept quiet and did not say any word (Mark 14:61).

Jesus was despised, laughed at and insulted in public. All these fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy.

Jesus was betrayed by his friends and segregated against for fear of being arrested by the authorities.

Jesus as a shepherd organized his believers who looked like sheep without a shepherd (1 Peter 2:25).

Jesus even when they were going to kill him, he was humble reserved and never disturbed them at all (Acts 8:32-33).

He carried our sins in his body to the cross so that he may bring righteousness to mankind. (1 Peter 2:24).

He was sentenced to death for the sake of mankind.

Jesus committed no sin and no one ever heard a lie come from his lips (1 Peter 2:22).

Jesus was killed with two bandits one on his right and the other on his left (Mark 15:27). He succeeded in his task of saving mankind. This was attained after shedding his blood on the cross.

Jesus was pure and innocent but Religious and political leaders of Israel went ahead to make him suffer and finally crucified him.

Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot respectively denied and betrayed Jesus at the moment of arrest till death.

During the sentencing of Jesus to be crucified no one came out to plead for him much as Jesus much as Jesus was innocent.

ISAIAH'S MESSAGE OF HOPE TO THE EXILES IN BABYLONIA

Isaiah gave a message of hope to the exiles in Babylonia after the conquest of Judah, by the Babylonians in around 587 BC.

In 587 BCE the people of Judah were taken into exile in Babylonia. This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy about the destruction of Judah and deportation of its inhabitants. By the time Isaiah gave this message of hope, Babylon was way to yet another power Persia. Babylon's power broke down in 539 BCE and this marked the rise of Cyrus as the ruler of Persia. He conquered the capital of Babylonia and restored the liberty of the Jews who were in exile.

The following is a summary of Isaiah's message of hope to the Israelites in Babylonia.

God told Isaiah to comfort his people by telling them that they had received enough punishments for their sins, and so their sins were forgiven. (Isaiah 40:2).

He promised to restore to greatness the people of Israel who will have survived the exile. He promised to use them as his light after the moment of suffering (Isaiah 49:6).

God promised them blessings that will flow like a stream that never goes dry if they listened to his commands.

On resettling in their land, God promised to increase their number to be as numerous as grains of sand.

That God will guard and protect his people and through them he will make a covenant with all people. (Isaiah 49:8).

He told them that God was going to liberate them from Babylonia captivity and bring them back to their country. In the new exodus to their land, God would be with them and he would lead them as a shepherd leads his flock (Isaiah 40:11).

That God would be their king when they return to Jerusalem. Therefore a theocratic rule would be restored. He told them that the great Jerusalem would be restored to its glory as a city of God.

Just as a woman cannot forget her own baby, So is the case of Israel with God; that even if a mother can forget her own child, God will never forget his people of Israel (Isaiah 49:15).

He told them that beautiful trees will grow where there are thorns and added that this transformation of nature would be a sign of what the Lord had done for his people.

He told them that the exiles would leave Babylonia in joy. They would leave in peace, that the mountains and hills will sing and trees would shout with joy (Isaiah 5:12).

He promised them that God would renew his strength if they put trust in him, and therefore he would be able to defend their country.

That God was going to do the liberation and restoration because he is the almighty, one who is the creator, provider. The Babylonian gods are nothing in comparison to Yahweh.

That God is a redeemer, liberator and saviour. As he liberated them from the people of Egypt, he was going to liberate them from the Babylonians and restore them after oppression.

God promised to send to them his servant who would bring light to them and lasting justice. They will therefore enjoy their New Canaan.

God pledged to keep back his anger that he will not use it to destroy his people anymore.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. a) *What happened to Isaiah in the year King Uzziah died?*
 b) *Examine the Lessons christens learn from Isaiah's call.*
2. a) *Comment on the qualities which Isaiah taught about the Lord's servant.*
 b) *How as the teaching on the Lord's servant fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ?*
3. a) *Discuss Isaiah's message of hope to the people of Judah who were exiled in Babylon.*
 b) *Examine Isaiah's teaching about he day of the Lord.*
4. a) *Comment on the theme of the suffering servant presented by Isaiah.*
 b) *How was this theme fulfilled in the personality of Jesus?*
5. a) *Discuss the message Isaiah gave to King Ahaz during the threats of Pakah and Resin.*
 b) *Discuss the lessons Christians learn from Isaiah's message to Ahaz.*
6. a) *Discuss Hezekiah's reforms.*
 b) *Discuss the lessons political leaders learn from King Hezekiah?*
7. *Discuss the area of disagreement between Isaiah and Ahaz.*
8. a) *Examine the ways in which the concept of the suffering servant in Isaiah differs from the Deuteronomic understanding of suffering.*
 b) *Show the relevance of Isaiah's concept suffering to Christian life today.*
9. a) *Examine the song of the vineyard which Isaiah sang for the people of Judah.*
 b) *What was Jesus' teaching on the vineyard?*
10. *Analyze prophetic signs showing their meaning at the time.*