# SERVANT OF YAHWEH

The phrase “servant of Yahweh” comes only once in the prophetic books, in Is 42:19; most Old Testament occurrences of the phrase come in Joshua, where it is a description of Moses. But the expressions “my servant,””your servant,” and “his servant,” with the pronoun referring to Yahweh, come a number of times in the prophetic books. The use of these expressions in Is 40 – 55 has been a subject of close study, particularly because some references are particularly significant in the New Testament and are also in their Old Testament context difficult to interpret.

## Occurrences

In the prophetic books, the first person Yahweh designates as “my servant” is Isaiah himself (Is 20:3), the second is a Judean political leader, Eliakim (Is 22:20), and the third is David (Is 37:35; cf. Jer 33:21, 22, 26; Ezek 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25). The description then becomes transferred to Israel as a whole (Is 41:8-9; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3; cf. Jer 30:10; 46:27-28). This transfer has a background in the description of Israel’s ancestor, the individual Jacob, as “my servant” (Ezek 28:25; 37:25). In some other passages, Yahweh’s servant is not identified (Is 42:1, 19; 44:26; 49:5, 6; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11). In yet other passages, Yahweh’s servants (plural) refers to the Israelites corporately, or to faithful Israelites (Is 54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8, 9, 13, 14, 15; 66:11; Dan 3:26, 28). Elsewhere, Yahweh’s servants are the prophets (Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Ezek 38:17; Dan 9:6, 10; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6).

In Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar is “my servant” (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). Elsewhere Moses is Yahweh’s servant (Dan 9:11; Mal 4:4 [3:22]), as are Daniel (Dan 6:20 [21]; 9:17), Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23), and the unnamed “Branch” (Zech 3:8), a new growth from the felled Davidic tree. Zerubbabel himself was such a new growth and Zechariah may here denote him by the Branch, as one who represents an embodiment of God’s faithfulness to David . Alternatively the Branch’s not being named may reflect the awareness that Zerubbabel’s leadership was short-lived and that he never became king. The Branch then refers to a future Davidic ruler whom God will one day send – a “Messiah,” to use the later term.

The Hebrew word *‘ebed* (in the Aramaic passages in Daniel, *‘ăbad*) denotes a person such as Abraham’s servant in Genesis 24 who is in a committed relationship with a master. This relationship involves a commitment on the servant’s part to do whatever the master requires and a commitment on the master’s part to protect and provide for the servant. In addition, a servant’s relationship with a master means the servant can represent the master and can have full power to act on the master’s behalf and with the master’s authority. The servant’s words and acts have the same weight as the master’s. These considerations apply in varying ways when the prophets describe someone as Yahweh’s servant. Moses or Isaiah himself being Yahweh’s servant means that people have to pay heed to their words; the same applies to the description of the prophets in general as Yahweh’s servants. Ignoring the servant’s words means risking the wrath of the master. Something similar is true of Nebuchadnezzar , God’s agent in bringing trouble on Judah; the Judahites must submit to him because he is Yahweh’s servant. Jacob, David, or Zerubbabel is Yahweh’s servant (along with “the Branch,” if that is not Zerubbabel); this means Yahweh is committed to them, fulfilled promises to them, and will do so again. Eliakim’s being Yahweh’s servant means Yahweh is committed to him rather than to the person who will be displaced in his favor.

This understanding of masters and servants is also background to the description of Israel as “my servant.” It is an aspect of the way positions occupied by individuals such as David can be applied to the people as a whole. Yahweh chose David as servant and thereby put him in a position of honor and security. Yahweh has done the same to Israel as a whole, in a way that reflects Israel’s being the descendants of Yahweh’s servant Jacob. In the context of exile, when Israel feels like a worm and has grounds for seeing itself as cast off by Yahweh because of its waywardness, Yahweh assures it that it actually has the exalted status that Jacob and David had as Yahweh’s chosen servant. Yahweh has not rejected it (Is 41.8-9; cf. 44:1-2; Jer 30:10; 46:27-28). Yahweh’s faithfulness to Israel as servant will be expressed in restoring it, and it is a basis for appealing to Israel to return to Yahweh (Is 44:21-22). It is for the sake of Israel as Yahweh’s servant that Yahweh is summoning Cyrus to be the means of putting Babylon down and restoring Israel (Is 45.4; cf. 48:20). David acted as a witness to Yahweh’s deity and power by carving out his empire; now the people as a whole will function as witnesses to Yahweh’s acts in restoring it, and will in this way function as Yahweh’s servant (Is 43.10; 55:3-5). Thus it is Yahweh’s intent that through Israel Yahweh’s attractiveness should be demonstrated (Is 49:3).

## The Unidentified Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 42:1-4 and 52:13 – 53:12

The central focus of study in connection with the phrase “servant of Yahweh” has been a number of passages in Isaiah where the servant is not identified, especially Isaiah 42:1-4 and 52:13 – 53:12; Isaiah 42:5-9 can be seen as an extension of the first passage. Both might be called visions, though the term applies more strictly to Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 than to Isaiah 42:1-4. Both passages might also be called job descriptions. Both include words and phrases that are difficult to interpret, which complicates issued raised by the servant’s anonymity. The appropriateness of calling them “visions” derives initially from the fact that the prophet (or rather, Yahweh) begins by pointing to the servant, as if it is someone who can be seen: “there is my servant” (Is 42:1); “there, my servant will act with insight” (Is 52:13). Both passages utilize the form of a declaration such as a prophet might make at a king’s coronation, in which the prophet proclaims what the king would or should do, what his achievements would be, and/or what God would bring about through him. The servant’s designation is thus analogous to that of a king. By implication, the designation lays an agenda before the king; it presents a challenge to him.

In Isaiah 42:1-4 the role of “my servant” relates to the nations, and key to it is the idea of bringing out *mišpāt* to them or establishing *mišpāt* among them. The word *mišpāt* is hard to translate into English. While it is often translated *justice*, the older translation *judgment* is nearer its meaning, though without the negative connotations that often attach to that word. *Mišpāt* denotes the exercise of power or authority or the capacity to make decisions. Ideally this will be an expression of justice, though this is not always so. Government comes near to the word’s meaning. Isaiah 40:14 asked, rhetorically, who taught Yahweh the way of *mišpāt*, the way to make decisions about how to create the world or how to run the world. In Isaiah 40:27 Israel asked what had happened to its own *mišpāt*, to the exercise of governmental power by Yahweh on its behalf in the world. Isaiah 42:1-4 declares that the servant’s role will be to see that such *mišpāt* reaches the nations. While this might mean that Yahweh’s servant is the means of implementing Yahweh’s rule there, in the last of its three occurrences in these four verses *mišpāt* is paralleled by *tôrâ* (“teaching”). This rather suggests that the servant’s role is to instruct the nations, to enable them to see how Yahweh has been exercising authority in the world, specifically in the rise of the Persians, who are overthrowing the Babylonian empire. The term “nations” often refers to the empire itself, and this may be so here; or it may refer to other peoples who like the Judahites will benefit from the fall of Babylon. In the following verses (Is 42:5-9) similar ideas are expressed in different ways as the prophecy follows the form of a commission addressed to a person such as a king, rather than a statement about the king. It declares that the person addressed (it is the context that suggests this is Yahweh’s servant) has been appointed as “a covenant of the people, a light of the nations.” The servant is the embodiment of what it means to be in a covenant with Yahweh and thus models this for people In general and thereby brings illumination and blessing to the nations.

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 , too, adapts the form of a declaration about a king, though it reworks it more radically. One mark of its poetic nature is the way it is structured as a chiasm. It begins and ends with words from Yahweh (Is 52:13-15 and 53:11b-12). Inside these words of Yahweh are the introductions and conclusions of a group that speaks about Yahweh’s servant (Is 53:1 and 10-11a). Inside this frame, in turn, are the group’s actual reflections (53:2-9), with their key insight at the center (53:4-6). The poem as a whole describes Yahweh’s servant as one who has been attacked and taken near to death, perhaps to actual death. Yahweh affirms that he will be restored and recognized by people. In the vision Yahweh and the prophet stand at a point where the attacks are past but the restoration future, though this does not establish where things are in real time outside the vision. As in Isaiah 42:1-9, Yahweh’s words speak of his significance for the nations, who will be astonished at what they hear about him. In the main part of the vision, the group who recognize him describe how they came to do so. He was someone who had gone through humiliation, rejection, and pain, and they had assumed that this was because of wrong he had done. They had come to realize that actually he had gone through his affliction as a result of identifying with them in the suffering that came to them, which in their case was indeed caused by their wrongdoing, and also as a result of the ministry he had exercised to them. He had been willing to go through this experience because doing so could bring them well-being (*šālôm*). It could do so because he was prepared in accordance with Yahweh’s own purpose to make his obedient suffering a kind of offering to Yahweh that could make compensation for their disobedience (an *’āšām*, a restitution offering). The key factor in their coming to this new understanding of his affliction was the silent, accepting way he put up with it.

## The Unidentified Servant of Yahweh: New Testament References

The account of the servant’s vocation and significance in Isaiah 42:1-9 and 52:13 – 53:12 is very different from the significance that attaches to being Yahweh’s servant in passages such as those that explicitly identify Israel or Isaiah or Nebuchadnezzar or some other person as Yahweh’s servant. In Christian tradition it was customary from New Testament times to take the two passages to refer to Jesus. Thus Matthew 12:18-21 quotes the whole of Isaiah 42:1-4 and declares that Jesus’ healing ministry “fulfilled” it. The New Testament quotes many individual verses from Isaiah 52:13 – 53.12 and sees them embodied in aspects of the Christ event. In Matthew 8:17, Yahweh’s taking up people’s infirmities (Is 53:4) is “fulfilled” in Jesus’ healing ministry. 1 Peter 2:22 looks at Jesus’ suffering in light of the way Isaiah 53:9 describes Yahweh’s servant as suffering without being led into sin or deceit; 1 Peter 2:24-25 utilizes further phrases from Isaiah 53:4-6. In Luke 22:37 Jesus speaks of a “fulfillment” in him of the words in Isaiah 53:1 about Yahweh’s servant being counted with the transgressors. John 12:38 sees people’s failure to believe in Jesus as “fulfilling” the rhetorical question, “Who has believed our message?” (Is 53:1; cf. also Rom 10:16). In Romans 15:21 Paul looks at his preaching around the Mediterranean about Jesus in light of the declaration that nations and kings would see and understand things they had never heard of (Is 52:15). Beyond such actual quotations, the picture of Yahweh’s servant in Isaiah 42:1-4 and 52:13 – 53:12 is of more pervasive influence in the New Testament, especially in connection with an understanding of Jesus’ death. Thus until the nineteenth century, Christian understanding of the passages simply assumed that they referred to Jesus.

The rise of critical interpretation of Scripture brought a sea change in the passages’ interpretation. The nature of critical interpretation is to question the church’s tradition of interpretation, to seek to start from scratch in interpreting passages, and to ask what they meant to their authors and original hearers. In that context, people would not take Isaiah 42:1-4 as a prophecy of the Messiah’s healing ministry, nor would they take Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 as an anticipatory account of a crucifixion.

When the New Testament uses these passages, it starts from Jesus and the knowledge that he is Savior and Lord, and looks back at the Scriptures (that is, the Old Testament) for help in understanding what that means. In particular, the first Christians needed help in understanding the surprising fact that the Messiah had been executed. The New Testament was not preoccupied with proving that Jesus was the Messiah. Its writers and the people for whom it was written knew that Jesus was the Messiah; they did not need convincing of this. They were rather concerned with knowing more clearly what it meant to call Jesus Messiah, Savior, and Lord, and with understanding puzzling facts about Jesus. Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 gave crucial help in that connection. Like any reading of Scripture that starts from the questions of later readers, this use of Isaiah was not concerned with understanding the text in its own right but with seeing how it answered these questions. Arguably, critical interpretation did the same thing; it just started from different questions, but its quest for the text’s original historical meaning was believed to correspond more to the text’s own agenda.

## The So-Called Servant Songs

Critical study thus sought to work out afresh the detailed exegesis of these two difficult passages, and also asked who they describe we do not assume they describe Jesus. The context in which it considered them in this connection was their setting in Isaiah 40 – 55 understood against the background of the exile, instead of their setting in the story of Jesus. Yet the collocation of the descriptions of an unnamed servant of Yahweh with the references to Israel as Yahweh’s servant in the chapters either side of Isaiah 42 deepened the mystery of who they referred to. Could Yahweh’s servant as portrayed in Isaiah 42:1-4 and 52:13 – 53:12 be the same person as Yahweh’s servant in those other passages in the context? It seemed implausible to see Israel as Yahweh’s servant in Isaiah 42:1-4, where Yahweh’s servant does not cry out in distress (the verb is similar to the one used of Israel crying out under oppression in Egypt) and does not snap off bent reeds or snuff out flickering candles. In the context of the exile, Israel itself is a bent reed and flickering candle and is crying out again as it did in Egypt. In Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 Yahweh’s servant is suffering as a result of his identification with the wrongdoing of other people and as a result of his ministry to them, and suffering without protest. In the context of the exile, Israel has been suffering as a result of its own wrongdoing and it is now protesting at Yahweh’s long-term abandonment of it.

In subsequent discussion of the tension between the portrayal of Yahweh’s servant in these varying ways , a key role has been played by a theory put forward by Bernhard Duhm in his epoch-making commentary on Isaiah, first published in 1892. One of his key theses was that these two passages, along with Isaiah 49:1-6 and 50:4-9 plus 10-11, were not original parts of Isaiah 40 – 55 but were a separate group of poems inserted later into the text. This would then explain the different understanding of Yahweh’s servant expressed in these four passages. In light of Duhm’s work it came to be regular convention to refer to these four poems as “the four servant songs,” even on the part of people who would not share Duhm’s critical views.

Separating the four poems from their context in Isaiah 40 – 55 solved one problem but created another. The problem it solved was that interpreters no longer needed to try to relate the four poems to that context; at one level that made it no longer necessary to reconcile the portrait of Yahweh’s servant in these four passages with the portrait elsewhere in the chapters. The problem it created was the question of who the four passages did refer to. This question dominated study of Isaiah 40 – 55 during the twentieth century.

Acts 8 tells of a man reading Isaiah 53 and wondering about its significance. He asks the evangelist Philip whether the prophet is talking about himself or about someone else. Beginning from this passage, Philip tells him the good news about Jesus. Along with the explicit identification of Israel as Yahweh’s servant elsewhere in Isaiah 40 – 55, this discussion provides a framework for discussing possible answers to the question of who is Yahweh’s servant in the four passages.

## The Servant’s Identity (1): The Messiah?

First, a usual Jewish and Christian view is that it is the Messiah (so, e.g., Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40 – 66*, p. 108). Partly if not entirely in reaction to Christian stress on the passages in this connection, this view became less common among Jews, who emphasized weaknesses in the Christian claim that the four passages prophesied Jesus. Whereas Matthew 12:18-21 says that Jesus’ healing ministry “fulfilled” Isaiah 42:1-4, it did so only in a loose sense. The New Testament’s only actual quotation from the first-person testimonies in Isaiah 49:1-6 or 50:4-11 makes a connection with Paul and Barnabas not with Jesus (see Acts 13:47). While some aspects of Jesus’ significance correspond to aspects of Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12, Jews point out (for instance) that this vision does not suggest crucifixion, that Jesus did not stay silent under sufferings, was not allocated a grave with the wicked, did not have offspring, and did not live a long life (see, e.g., Outreach Judaism, “**Who is God’s Suffering Servant? “)**. Whereas it became customary for Christians to use passages such as Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 apologetically, as a means of proving that Jesus was the Messiah, we have noted that the New Testament uses such passages theologically and parenetically rather than apologetically. It uses them, that is, not to proves something but to help believers understand what it means for Jesus be their Lord and Savior, and to help them see what is the nature of the life of discipleship to which they are called (see especially 1 Peter 2:22-25). If passages such as Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 are not prophesies of the Messiah, this does not make it inappropriate for Christians to see Jesus as the supreme embodiment of the vision of Yahweh’s servant, but it makes it necessary to articulate that point in a different way.

The New Testament helps us in two other ways to understand the connection between these passages and Jesus. When the Ethiopian asks whether Isaiah 53 is about the prophet or someone else, Acts does not report that Philip simply says “It’s about the Messiah” or “It’s about Jesus.” Rather it reports that Philip started from this passage and told the man the good news about Jesus. This is a rather more allusive statement; it suggests a less direct way of understanding the relationship between the passage and Jesus. Indeed, it corresponds to the way we have suggested the New Testament uses the passage. It does not treat it as an anticipatory video of the crucifixion. Rather, starting from specific facts about Jesus such as his silence under attack or people’s failure to believe in him, it goes back to Isaiah 53 to enable us to see these facts as not mere accidents but part of a broader picture of the achievement of God’s purpose.

The other way the New Testament helps us is by Matthew’s use of the verb translated “fulfill,” which often appears in the New Testament in such connections. In Christian parlance “fulfill” is a quasi-technical term in connection with the idea that God made concrete revelations about the future, which then come about as announced. But the verb *plēroō* is not by nature a technical term. It is the ordinary Greek word for “fill.” In contexts such as this, it suggests something like “fill up” or “fill out” as easily as “fulfill.” When Paul speaks of love as the “fulfilling” of the law, he does not mean that if you love you will obey the law. He means you will do the kind of thing the law was aiming at. As there is an indirect relationship between the law and what Christians do when they live by the Spirit, there is an indirect relationship between prophecy and what happens in New Testament times. The fulfillment fills out the prophecy as it fills out the law; it takes it in new directions, ignores parts of it and reshapes others, and assimilates it to a new agenda.

## 4.2 The Servant’s Identity (2): Someone Other Individual?

During the century following the publication of Duhm’s commentary, many suggestions were made for the identity of Yahweh’s servant in Duhm’s “servant songs.” C. R. North surveyed the theories propounded over the first half of this period in *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*; although this book is now very old, it reports quite enough theories for most tastes. For a number of these, the starting point could be the identification of this servant in other passages of Scripture, noted above. Moses, for instance, undertook aspects of the role described, and experienced suffering as a consequence of being Yahweh’s servant. The same might have been true of Zerubbabel: Ernst Sellin in *Serubbabel* suggested that he was enthroned as king in Judah and then executed by the Persians. Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 would then link with this. Zerubbabel had a son called Meshullam (1 Chron 3:19), a name meaning something like “one in a covenant of well-being.” The word *mĕšullām* comes with that meaning in Isaiah 42:19 as a description of Yahweh’s servant, and J. L. Palache in *The Ebed-Jahweh Enigma in Pseudo-Isaiah* suggested that the verse actually refers to this Meshullam (about whom nothing else is known) and identified him as Yahweh’s servant.

While no one has suggested that Nebuchadnezzar is Yahweh’s servant in Isaiah 40 – 55, the notion that Yahweh’s servant is a non-Israelite king opens up the possibility that it is Cyrus the Persian leader, the equivalent figure to Nebuchadnezzar in the time to which Isaiah 40 – 55 speaks (so Watts, *Isaiah 34 – 66*, pp. 643-61; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40 – 55*, pp. 76-77, at least in connection with Is 42:1-9). He is certainly identified as Yahweh’s anointed (*mĕšîah*) in Isaiah 45:1.

## 4.3 The Servant’s Identity (3): The Prophet?

Whereas Isaiah 42:1-4 and 52:13 – 53:12 speak of Yahweh’s servant in the third person, Isaiah 49:1-6 and 50:4-9 are first-person testimonies in which someone speaks like a prophet. This fits the description of Isaiah ben Amoz and of prophets in general as Yahweh’s servants. R. N. Whybray’s comment is apposite: “In view of the fact that in the prophetical books generally the subject of speeches in the first person singular, when it is not Yahweh and not otherwise indicated, is normally the prophet himself, it is remarkable that this identification should have been contested in this case by so many commentators” (*Isaiah 40 – 66*, p. 135).

The implication is that these two passages describe the ministry of the anonymous prophet whose work lies behind Isaiah 40 – 55. In Isaiah 49:1-6 the prophet speaks of being summoned by Yahweh before birth, as happened to Jeremiah, and of being designated “my servant.” Verse 3 goes on to speak of Yahweh designating the prophet as “Israel, in whom I will display my attractiveness,” and then of commissioning a ministry to bring Israel back to Yahweh. The reference to Israel as both the identity of the speaker and as the object of the speaker’s ministry is an issue for any view of Yahweh’s servant’s identity; the designation implies a call to embody what Israel was supposed to be, on an interim basis until Israel itself is brought back to Yahweh. The testimony goes on to describe the prophet’s lack of success but then speaks of Yahweh’s giving a larger task, to be the means whereby Yahweh’s deliverance comes to be known to the ends of the earth. The further testimony in Isaiah 50:4-9 then describes the prophet’s experience of opposition and certainty of vindication. It is only in the supplementary verses 10-11 that the speaker in verses 4-9 is explicitly identified as Yahweh’s servant.

Along with other scholars, Whybray takes the view that Isaiah 42:1-4 and 52:13 – 53:12 also refer to the prophet, though one could pursue his initial logic and suggest that, as it is natural to take the use of first-person speech to indicate that the prophet speaks, so it is natural to take third-person speech to indicate that the passage refers to someone else.

This raises the question of whether all four of Duhm’s “servant songs” need denote the same person. Many people are designated Yahweh’s servant within the Old Testament as a whole; why should this not be so within Isaiah 40 – 55? There is a related question. The problem with the twentieth-century quest for the identity of Yahweh’s servant was that it was far too fruitful, because there was no way of arguing for or against many of the theories. This was the problem Duhm created. Isolating the four “servant songs” from their context in Isaiah 40 - 55, makes it impossible to identify Yahweh’s servant. Thus T. N. D. Mettinger suggests it is time to say *Farewell to the Servants Songs*. Their being no more or no less songs than other parts of Isaiah 40 – 55 is one supporting argument. Going back to reading the “songs” in their context more likely opens up the possibility of progress in interpreting them.

## 4.4 The Servant’s Identity (4): Israel?

This takes us back to Israel as Yahweh’s servant, the explicit identification in Isaiah 41:8-9 and the usual modern Jewish view regarding all the passages about Yahweh’s servant. When Isaiah 42:1-4 follows on from Isaiah 41:8-9 in making further statements about Yahweh’s servant, it is natural to assume that the term refers to the same entity. Isaiah 42:1-4 describes Israel’s task as Yahweh’s servant. We noted that the relationship between a master and a servant is one of mutual commitment; the master is committed to the servant and the servant is committed to the master. Isaiah 41:8-9 and 42:1-4 represent the two directions of this commitment. But in itself, Isaiah 42:1-4 then describes not a person but a role. Its exegesis “must not be controlled by the question, ‘Who is this servant of God?’”; it neither tells nor intends to tell us that (Westermann, *Isaiah 40 –* 66, p. 93). “The question of the identity of the servant is not raised; attention is restricted to what he is to do” (Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, p. 318). Isaiah 41 has told us that Israel is Yahweh’s servant, and Isaiah 42:1-4 goes on to describe what that will involve. The problem is that we know this servant cannot fulfill this role. Our assumption is confirmed in 42:18-25, the sole passage where the actual phrase “Yahweh’s servant” occurs, and where it is described as deaf and blind. In this sense we might see Yahweh’s servant in Isaiah 42:1-4 as “the ideal Israel.” Isaiah 43 – 48 confirms that Israel itself nevertheless still has this status and ultimately this vocation, but in the meantime it needs to have the servant role fulfilled towards it. It is in this connection and in this sense that the prophet is to embody what it means to be Israel, to bring Israel itself back to God. Insofar as one can speak of the remnant of Israel as fulfilling the role of Yahweh’s servant, it is the prophet who is the remnant of Israel; the broader remnant would be the people who respond to the challenge to identify with Yahweh’s servant (Is 50:10-11). The task of bringing Israel back to Yahweh and being a light to the nations is then systematically described in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. In my view it makes sense to see this as a further description of the prophet’s vocation. Its application to Jesus then involves a typological interpretation of it.

In terms of the meaning of Isaiah 40 – 55, then, there is thus truth both in the view that Israel is Yahweh’s servant and in the view that the prophet is Yahweh’s servant. Outside of the context of Isaiah 40 - 55, Christians know that Jesus is the supreme embodiment of the servant vision, and in this sense there is truth in the view that the Messiah is Yahweh’s servant. Yet passages such as 1 Peter 2 indicate that the New Testament also expects the job description or vision of Yahweh’s servant to be one that the church fulfills. Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 is not fulfilled in the person of Jesus in a way that then means it has no further implications. The vision of Yahweh’s servant is one to be fulfilled again and again. It has been fulfilled by the Jewish people as well as by the church. By its own nature the vision seeks to draw its readers into fulfilling it (Clines, *I, He, We and They,* pp. 63-64*).*

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