I. THE LORD’S SERVANT BRINGS SALVATION, 49:1-6

A. The speaker is the Lord’s Servant, Israel, rather than the prophet, 3, 5-6

B. The Servant relates to the nations a dialogue between himself and Yhwh regarding his mission, declaring that Yhwh called him from the womb (1,4), thus preparing him to proclaim God’s word, 2-3

C. He regrets that he has failed in his mission, 4

D. Yhwh charges him (v. 5) to be a “light” to the nations, 6

E. NT Usage: 49:6; Acts 13:47

II. DIALOGUE BETWEEN YHWH AND ZION, 49:7-50:3

A. The Speaker, the Prophet, declares that he is announcing the message of Lord, 49:7-8, 18, 22, 25; 50:1

B. Once voices his own reaction to Yhwh’s deeds, 49:13

C. Yhwh orders the exiles to return to Zion and promises protection, 49:7-12

D. The prophet calls upon creation to rejoice in response, 13

E. Zion affirms that God has forsaken her, 14

F. Yhwh responds that love for Zion is so indelibly on his heart that he could never forget her and will restore the people, 15-26

1. NT Usage: 49:18; 2 Cor 6:2

G. Yhwh explains that Judah was exiled for their sins and chastens them for not turning to him sooner, 50:1-3

III. OBEDIENCE OF THE LORD’S SERVANT, 50:4-11

A. History of research:

1. The speaker changes–His identity must be determined from the audience
2. “Some see in these verses a prediction because of the coming of Christ because of the first person singular, certain descriptions that call to mind NT statements concerning Christ (cf. vs. 6 with Matt. 26:67; Luke 18:32), and the similarity of languages between verses 8-9 and Romans 8:33 (e.g., Barnes, *Isaiah*, vol. 3, pp. 72-73; Young, *Isaiah*, vol. 3, p. 298).

3. “Others believe the prophet is speaking of his own role in God’s scheme and of his responsibility to his hearers (e.g., P. R. Ackroyd, “The Book of Isaiah,” *IOVC*, p. 361)” (Willis, 405).


B. The servant addresses the exiles, explaining that the Lord has called him to proclaim the divine word to his comrades, 4-5

C. Despite persecution from his people he has put his trust in God and persisted to do the work he has been commissioned to do, 6-7

D. He challenges his hearers to prove him wrong, 8-9

E. He urges the hearers to trust in Yhwh and warns against persistence in rebellion and idolatry, 10-11

IV. THE TIME TO RETURN IS AT HAND, 51:1-52:12

A. Background and purpose:

1. The prophet is the speaker throughout this section except for the people in 51:9-10

2. He addresses dejected exiles who are trying to live for God, but think he has abandoned them.

3. The material is targeted for those living close to the time of Cyrus’ decree (536/5)
4. **Purpose:** comfort by informing them that Yhwh’s decree is now to return to Jerusalem (cf. 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9).

B. **Deliverance is at hand, 51:1-11**

1. Address to the righteous exiles, 1, 7
2. Reminds them that God made Abraham and Sarah into a nation
3. Such a God can deliver from captivity, 3
4. Once delivered their responsibility will be to tell all peoples in an attempt to convert them from idol worship, 4-6
5. Do not fear earthly captors for salvation is from the Lord, 7-8
6. The exiles plead to deliver them as he did the forefathers from the Red Sea, 9-10
7. Prophetic assurance that they would return to Jerusalem, 11

C. **Zion Urged to be ready, 51:12-52:12:**

1. **Background:**
   a. Yhwh addresses the uninhabited city of Jerusalem
   b. “The persons addressed vary considerably in this paragraph. For example, the first you in verse 12a is masculine plural, the second and third you in 12b are feminine singular. Such variation is not uncommon in prophetic literature, but in this particular passage it is virtually impossible to know the audience intended in each case. The exiles in Babylon are certainly addressed in 52:11-12 and possibly in 51:12-16. However, personified Jerusalem seems to be addressed in the rest” (Willis, 411).

2. **Structure:**
   a. Yhwh exhorts Exiles not to fear, 51:12-13
   b. He is about to release the righteous remnant and restore Jerusalem,
c. Babylon is about to drink the cup Jerusalem drank in 587, 51:17-23

d. He will protect Jerusalem from future invasions, 52:1-6

(1) **NT Usage:** 52:5; Rom 2:24

e. Jerusalem should rejoice, 52:7-10

(1) The city watchmen rejoice as they see the coming messenger making his journey over the mountains and through the valleys toward Jerusalem with the good news of Yhwh's restoration of Zion

(2) This salvation is seen throughout the earth, v. 10

(3) **NT Usage:** 52:7; Rom 10:15

f. Charge to depart from Babylon, 52:11-12

(1) **NT Usage:** 52:11; 2 Cor 6:17

V. **THE SUFFERING SERVANT, 52:13-53:12**

A. **Problem:** Who is the speaker of this section? Critics disagree, but the following seems tenable (cf. Willis, 417).


2. The penitent exiles who are about to return speak in 53:1-6--note use of 1st person plural in vv. 1, 4, 6.


B. The main figure throughout is the suffering servant; but four other groups play a part:
1. The prophet himself, 53:10-11a

2. The Lord, who brings on the servant’s suffering, 53:4, 6, 10

3. The “3rd person plural” known as “many” (52:14; 53:11, 12), “many nations” (52:15), “they, their, them” (52:15; 53:3, 9, 11), and “men” (53:3)–these are probably “the nations,” i.e., “Gentiles.”

4. The “1st person plural” known as “we, us, our” (53:1-6), who are to be distinguished from the Lord (53:1, 4, 6), the suffering servant (53:2-6), and the nations (53:3).

5. “This leaves only the Israelites. As a matter of fact, a comparison of verses 4 and 8 supports this view. In verse 4 they state that the servant was ‘stricken’ (Heb. *naghua*) because of their (‘our’) transgressions (cf. vs. 5), and in verse 8 Yahweh declares that he was ‘stricken’ (Heb. *negha*) because of the transgression of ‘my people.’ In other words, ‘our’ in verse 4 is equivalent to ‘my people’ in verse 8. But the context shows that these are hardly Israel as a whole; rather, they are the penitent, faithful members of the Jewish exile who realize that they have been unfaithful to Yahweh and are open to the coming of ‘a man’ (53:3) who will save them from their transgressions’ (Willis, 418).

C. In view of the above, the only possible answer relative to the identify of this individual is the Messiah–not some great individual, the prophet, or Israel as a whole.

1. Only Jesus Christ, not some other individual or group, can accomplish what is said of this individual.

2. “... the servant is pictured in highly personal or individualistic terms, and it is difficult to think of even a faithful and responsive group within Israel as fitting the description,” (J. P. Hyatt, *Meeting God through Isaiah* [Nashville: The Upper Room, 1958], 24).

3. The “corporate personality” specifying a particular group does not work as well as realizing that “it is much more probable that the Prophet thought of an individual still to come, one who would, in his own person, fully actualize the Servant ideal,” (North, *Isaiah 40-55*, 35).

4. “It is especially difficult to see how the servant’s deliverate suffering and
death in order to bear the iniquity of the Jews (53:6) and the Gentiles (53:11) could refer to anyone more naturally than to Christ” (Willis, 419).


[The suffering servant’s] death is described as a sacrifice, superior to any offered in the Temple in that it was the offering of one who was without moral blemish, and wider in its efficacy in that it availed for Gentiles who confessed that his sufferings should really have been theirs. In remarkable ways this finds its realization in Christ, whose death has been the organ of his world wide mission, and before whose Cross multitudes have felt the words the prophet put in the mouths of men who saw the sufferings of the servant were alone adequate to express their confession. . . . The fulfillment of the prophetic hope came in the person of Jesus.

D. **Structure:**

1. Yhwh indicates that the disfigured servant would be exalted, 52:13-15

2. Exiles respond that very few had believed such a report about the coming of such a servant, who they found unattractive, but whose suffering caused such an appearance, due to the exiles’ sins, 53:1-6

3. Yhwh reenforces these thoughts and praises the servant, 53:7-9

4. The prophet praises Yhwh and the servant for being willing to make the necessary sacrifice for sin, 53:10-11a

5. Yhwh concludes that because the servant was willing to suffer and die all men, not Jews only, could be forgiven through the servant’s intercession, 53:11b-12

E. **NT Usage:** Many of these passages are reflected in the NT.

1. 52:15; Rom 15:21
2. 53:1; Jn 12:38; Rom 10:16
3. 53:4; Matt 8:17
4. 53:7-8; Acts 8:32-33
5. 53:9; 1 Pet 2:22
6. 53:12; Lk 22:37
VI. YHWH'S PROMISE OF RESTORATION TO ZION, CH. 54

A. The prophet relates his message to the dejected Zion, 1-10
   1. *NT Usage*: 54:1; Gal 4:27

B. He compares Zion to a barren wife (v. 1), a widow (v. 4), and an abandoned woman (v. 6).

C. He affirms he will restore her to her former glory, 1-10

D. He promises to protect her from invaders, 11-17
   1. *NT Usage*: 54:13; John 6:45

VII. THE EXILES SUMMONED TO JERUSALEM, CH. 55

A. 54 is addressed to Zion (2nd fem. sing), but 55 is addressed to the Exiles (2nd masc. sing)

B. *Structure*:
   1. Yhwh speaks, urging his people to leave Babylon and its idols and return to Jerusalem in faithfulness, 1-4
   2. The prophet speaks, declaring that if they do this the nations will turn to God, 5-7
   3. Yhwh speaks, declaring that though they cannot understand him, they should trust his promises of deliverance, 8-11
   4. The prophet speaks, promising a safe journey home, 12-13