

9023U

SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL - 1998

YAHWEH IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG

Behold, My Servant

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study #1 An Introduction to the Servant Songs

Reading:

Well, thank you brother chairman, and my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, and my dear young people and my dear friends.

The third series of addresses during the course of this school, is going to cover the matter of the Servant Songs of Isaiah; and that, of course, takes us to a later part of the book, in fact, it takes us to Isaiah 42 and onwards, because most of you will probably know that in the book of Isaiah, by the way, to paraphrase or to requote a person who spoke this morning and shall remain nameless, I come from the southern part of the world. Worse still, I come from New Zealand, and that means that I've learnt all my life, to say Isaiah, not that other way, and so you're going to have to listen to different pronunciations over the course of the week, I do hope you'll understand mine, because that's how I'm going to describe the book that we're going to deal with and we're going to look at Isaiah 42 and onward in terms of the Servant Songs.

So what exactly are the Servant Songs of Isaiah? Well, we take note of this idea that in the second part of the book of Isaiah, there is a set of prophecies that run from Isaiah chapter 41 right through to chapter 53, that have come to be known as the Servant Prophecies of Isaiah; and they're known as the Servant Prophecies of Isaiah for the simple reason that here we have a series of passages in which the servant of the LORD, or the servant of Yahweh, is mentioned, and so you can see the whole series mentioned here:

<u>chapter</u>	<u>verses</u>
41	8-10
42	1-7
42	18-20
43	8-10
44	1-2
44	21-23
44	26
45	4

48	20
49	1-6
50	4-9
52&53 52:13-53:12 (finally, a long section that runs from 52:13-53:12)	

So we've got a whole set of passages, you see here, about the servant of God, and therefore, this section of the record has come to be known as the Servant Prophecies.

Now the interesting thing that we take note of as the overhead says here, is that although these prophecies begin with a reference to Jacob the servant of God, by the time that we finish the series, there's absolutely no doubt that we're dealing with an ideal individual servant, one particular outstanding man. The story of the servant begins as a whole nation but it ends up as one particular person.

Now unless you get distracted by that for too long, let me give you a couple of illustrations that we shall work through. Firstly, come to chapter 42 for example, and let me just show you a couple of things there. In Isaiah 42 we read these words in the 19th verse concerning the servant of these prophecies, and there it says, 'Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as Yahweh's servant?' So here we have a prophecy that castigates the servant; the servant is condemned here for the fact that he is blind and deaf. He has not proved to be a good servant at all, he has not fulfilled the requirements of his master, and yet surprisingly, we notice in the very same chapter and verse 1, the record says, 'behold, my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth'. So clearly the servant of verse 1 cannot be the same as the servant of verse 19, because the one is castigated whereas the other is honoured, as being a source of joy and delight to Almighty God. So although we've got a series of passages about the servant of God, we suddenly get the idea that, in fact, there are two servants mentioned. Two quite different servants in this particular string of passages.

Again come to chapter 41 and verses 8 and 9, and you'll notice there it says in chapter 41 and verse 8, 'But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away'. Thou, Israel art my servant, says verse 8, Jacob whom I have chosen; now if you know your bibles well, you'll know that the word 'Jacob' always and invariably refers to the nation of Israel, to the natural seed of God. To Israel as a nation, so therefore, this particular prophecy about the servant, is a prophecy about the nation as a whole, my servant Jacob, although they are also called Israel.

But when you come to chapter 49, notice this is the 49th chapter reading verses 3 and 6 together, because there the prophet says, 'And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified', and you see, if we were to go no further than the third verse we might imagine that this is the same servant as Isaiah 41, 'thou art my servant, O Israel'. But when we read verse 6 we notice of this servant it's going to say, and he

said, 'It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth'. So you see, the servant of Isaiah 41 is called 'Jacob', but the servant of Isaiah 49 is going to 'restore Jacob', so the servant of chapter 49 cannot be the same servant as chapter 41, because he's going to restore the nation of Jacob to God. Yes, there are two different servants here, so we have to ponder what the two servants are about.

In fact, if we look at that second series, a little bit further down on the overhead, we find that we have some specific comparisons noted in the text here. We might just turn it up, shall we? just to have a look at those, so you'll notice that the first one is one that we've already looked at, but let's just look at the language again, because here we have the language of comparison. The two servants are obviously being described in similar language, Isaiah 41 verse 8 says, 'But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend' and that phrase there, 'Israel art my servant' is virtually identical to what we read there in chapter 49 and verse 3 when it said, 'Thou art my servant, O Israel'. So they're called by the same name, these two servants, they've got the same names at least to start with; again we notice in this parallel if we come to chapter 44 and verse 2 it says this, reading from verse 1 for connection, 'Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith Yahweh that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; fear not, O Jacob my servant and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. Again, if we come to chapter 49 and verse 5, notice the similarity of language here concerning the other servant; because in chapter 49 and verse 5 it says, 'Now saith Yahweh (and here's the same phrase) 'that formed me from the womb to be His servant' (that's the very phrase in chapter 44, isn't it?) 'Thus saith Yahweh who formed thee from the womb; so the same language you see, it's exactly the same thing, the two servants are obviously being compared.

In chapter 43 and verse 1, you'll notice that the reference there says this, 'But now thus saith Yahweh that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; thou art mine!' I have called thee by name, says the prophet, as he refers to this great national servant, the nation of Israel. Yet in chapter 49 and verse 1 we have again almost identical words, because in chapter 49 verse 1 the record says, 'Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye people from far, Yahweh hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name'. I have called thee by name, He hath made mention of my name, you see, both of these servants are the subject, aren't they? of a special relationship with God.

And finally, you'll notice in 41 and verse 13, the record is going to say concerning firstly, the national servant, the record says, 'For I, Yahweh thy God will hold thy right hand', says the record; and if you come over the page to Isaiah 42 and verse 6 we read there, 'I Yahweh hath called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee'. So you see, how similar the two servants are in these records, both are called God's servant, both are named Israel, both are formed from the womb by divine power,

both are called by name, both are held by God's hand, both are the subject of the providential guidance of the hand of the Almighty upon them. But there are going to be some differences between these two servants and those differences are going to emerge, so that the one servant is not just merely compared to the other, but in the end, will stand in the record in direct contrast to the other!

So coming to the bottom of this overhead here, we find therefore, that there are 4 of these passages above, that we believe relates to the individual servant himself, and these have come to be known as 'the servant songs' of Isaiah, and there they are:

chapter 42 verses 1 to 7;  
 chapter 49 verses 1 to 6;  
 chapter 50 verses 4 to 9;  
 chapter 52 verse 13 to chapter 53 verse 12.

These are the servant songs of Isaiah. Four songs about the ideal individual servant of God. By the way, they're not songs because they're sung, **they are songs because they are poems; they're poetical songs about the servant of God**, whoever he is, we don't know at this stage who the servant is, do we? we're going to have to explore the songs before we'll get to the bottom of exactly who this special and unique man was.

Now, before we do that, let's have a look then at one or two passages that talk about the national servant in particular, just to see, what God had provided to them and for them, in order that they might reflect the qualities of their God in life. Come back to chapter 41 again, and let's have a look at verses 9 and 10; you see, in every way the nation of Israel as God's servant, had been given by Him everything that was necessary, so that they might serve Him faithfully. So they might be a light to the Gentiles, so that they might display His qualities in all the world. Isaiah 41 and verse 9 says, 'Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness'. You see, what these verses are promising, is that Israel as a nation would be the subjects of divine providence. In all the life experiences of the nation, the providential hand of their God would be upon them, to guide them, so that they might become a reflection of Him amidst all the other nations. This was the promise of the bible, and the promise of God to His people, 'I will be with thee, I am thy God'. You see, Israel as a nation had so much to be thankful for in terms of the blessings they had received, and not only divine providence but if you come to chapter 43, they were also the object of special protection, because notice what it says in the 43rd chapter of Isaiah and again from verses 8 to 10, 'Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, it is

truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith Yahweh and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me'. You see, Israel was ever the promise of divine protection, and the reason why Israel as a nation has miraculously survived all manner of difficulties, all manner of obstacles, is not because they're the best nation on earth, it's not because they're a righteous nation, but because they're God's servant, and because He has chosen them to be His witnesses; and what as well as the nation is the witness of, is the remarkable survival from impossible odds, that declares to all the world that this nation, this special nation in some particular way, are God's national servants, preserved for that very reason.

Oh, yes, this nation had much to be thankful for, did they not? What about chapter 44 and verses 1 and 2? You see, in Isaiah 44 and verses 1 and 2 it says, 'Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith Yahweh that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee. Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen'. Do you know where the term Jesurun comes from? where does the word 'Jesurun' come from? It's Deuteronomy 32, let's come back and have a look at it shall we? because this is a title borrowed from the past, isn't it? just take a look at Deuteronomy 32 and see how Jesurun figures with relationship to the nation of Israel as God's special people, His special servants which Isaiah 49 makes reference to, 'thou art my servant, fear not Jacob my servant, and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen'. The word 'Jesurun' means 'the upright or pleasant one' (3484) and here it is Deuteronomy 32, we're told this in verse 8, 'When the Most High divide to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel' (Israel became the measure by which every other nation was judged and apportioned). Verse 9, 'For Yahweh's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So Yahweh alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. But Jeshurun waxed fat' (you see, this is a title that records for us the wonderful privileges that Israel received as a nation; can't we see it there in the 32 chapter of Deuteronomy?) In every way they've been blessed abundantly, haven't they? as God's servants. Jesurun, the upright, pleasant one, whom God had chosen. And not only that, but if you come back to chapter 44 again, and in the 21st verse, we're told in Isaiah 44 and verse 21 we're told this concerning the national servant, 'Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee', now you'll probably remember that when the nation of Israel came through the wilderness, a man called Balaam was sent

that he might curse Israel. Do you remember that occasion? and he found that he was unable to curse the nation, instead he could but bless them; and these are the words that that man Balaam uttered as he gazed out upon the encampment of Israel, the national servant of God, he said this, 'He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel' (Numbers 23 verse 21) Do you know, b&s, those words were uttered by Balaam at a time when there was terrible weakness in the nation of Israel, when there was dreadful sin, and the signs of apostasy and yet Balaam said that God hath not seen iniquity in His people; 'I have blotted out thy transgressions, is the promise of God in Isaiah 44 to His people. You see, they were the subjects of divine forgiveness, weren't they?

So you see:	chapter 41	- divine providence;
	chapter 43	- divine protection;
	chapter 44:1-2	- divine privileges;
	chapter 44:21-23	- divine forgiveness.

What more could this nation have? To be God's servants! As one writer has said, concerning those passages, this very list becomes an array of charges by which the nation is finally indicted for their hopeless failure! Despite all that Yahweh had done for them, Israel grew wayward and rebellious, and for this failure they are severely castigated by the prophet; they are revealed to be both blind and deaf to their Master's requirements. Ears are needed to execute a Master's command, eyes are required for its effective execution, and a servant devoid of these attributes is worse than useless. Yet Israel was blind and deaf by deliberate choice not by inherent deficiency, and this also was a reason for their lack of development. Upon this background then of national failure and disgrace, the individual servant of Yahweh is introduced. His appearance in the record, whilst outlined in a quiet unobtrusive manner, is sufficient nevertheless, to present a pointed and striking contrast to the national servant. His passive yet persevering approach would accomplish that which the national servant could not. God's purpose although initially frustrated by Israel's disobedience, would be consummated in and through a new servant, whose humble obedience would win the divine approbation.

If you come back to chapter 42 for a moment, not that I'm going to read a verse from there, but I'm just going to read for you a rather interesting passage from Rotherham's translation, that appears at the beginning of Isaiah 42, this is a footnote in Rotherham's Emphasized Bible and it appears as a note that should stand at the beginning of chapter 42 and this is what he says: 'The mission of Jacob as collective servant of Yahweh having been declared, from behind him, steps forth an individual servant, known to be such by His becoming a covenant for His own people, Who enters into His people's calling and carries it forward to fulfillment'. Now you see, now we understand why it was that a second servant had to step forward-because the nation failed, the nation did not live up to the divine ideal, the nation did not warrant the blessings and the privileges that God had wrought upon them. So one man steps forth, to do that which Israel as a nation had never been able to accomplish. So what we find in these

particular chapters in the book of Isaiah then, in these servant prophecies, is a remarkable comparison between the two, whereby the national servant is seen to be the ideal in every sense, in all the ways that Israel as a nation failed, this man would succeed.

Now just have a look at this, to see how remarkable this comparison is in the divine record of these chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah. You see, what we're told in Isaiah 42 and verse 20, is that the national servant was unable to perceive divine principles, and yet, concerning the individual servant we will read of Him in Isaiah 53 and verse 11, that He was profoundly aware of divine requirements that lay upon Him. Of the national servant, we shall learn in chapter 48 and verse 18, that he failed to listen to divine commandments; and yet of the individual servant we shall read in chapter 50 and verse 4, that He was consistently attentive to divine instruction. Of the national servant, we shall read in Isaiah 40 and verse 27 that the national servant was totally devoid of trust in God's power to direct their lives; and yet of the individual servant we shall read in Isaiah 50 and verse 7 that this One was resolutely confident at all times, that God would support Him in whatever trials might come upon Him in life. In Isaiah 42 and verse 25, we're going to read that the national servant would be completely insensitive to God's correction; and yet of the individual servant we're going to read in chapter 49 and verse 1, that this man was deeply conscious of God's influence upon Him from the very earliest moment of His life. In Isaiah 43 and verse 22, we're going to read that the national servant eventually would grow weary of offering obedience; and yet concerning the individual servant we shall read in Isaiah 53 and verse 7, that this One would yield perfect obedience, even to the surrendering of His own life, in death itself. In Isaiah 48 and verse 4 we shall read that the national servant became stubborn and obstinate of mind; and yet of the individual servant we shall read in chapter 42 and verse 2, this man, this servant, who remained meek and submissive in spirit at all times. And finally, in Isaiah 42 and verse 19, as we have already had occasion to notice, the national servant is finally castigated for their failure to please Almighty God, and yet, in the very first moment that the individual servant is introduced to us, in Isaiah 42 and verse 1, we will read of this One, this man, this servant, that He was ultimately blessed as a source of delight to His God. What a remarkable contrast! you couldn't get a more startling contrast between the two servants, could you? carefully brought together by the prophet, and shown to be absolutely different; where the national servant had failed, this ideal man would not, He would step forward and He would take up the work of His own nation and where they had failed, he would carefully and quietly but diligently succeed to the blessing of His heavenly Father.

So we've got two servants! and we've got a man here who's going to step forward remarkably and take up that work! And as we come through the four servant songs, and we're going to obviously, God willing, in the course of our next studies, we're going to spend study #2 on the first song, and the next study #3 on the second song, and then study #4 on the third, and studies #5 and #6 we're going to spend on the fourth song, because the fourth song is so much longer, isn't it? because it embraces all of Isaiah 53 and a few verses of chapter 52, and we're going to break that into two, so that we've got

time to munch on it; we've got time to chew on it, time to savour what's going on in this particular passage and in a little more detail. But what we're going to notice is this, that as we start moving through these songs that we get the sense of it steadily rising. It's like a pyramid almost, and the sides of the pyramid are the successive demands of service that restrict, more and more people until eventually One comes to the apex of the pyramid, and there is only one man left who can fulfil all the demands of service, and do so perfectly. It begins with the nation at the bottom and it will end with the individual servant at the top, and we have a gradual buildup in the intensity of the servant's work, in the course of these songs. In fact, that's an essential theme, we believe, within the songs themselves. Although each song might be focusing on particular things, for example:

Song #1 is going to deal principally with the servant's character;

Song #2 is going to talk about His call;

Song #3 is going to speak about His qualifications under trial;

Song #4 is going to contemplate His ultimate vindication.

But, over and above all of that, there's going to be certain golden threads that run through all 4 songs together. I think there are 3 golden threads, and here they are. Although these chapters are scattered through the servant prophecies themselves, I think these are the 3 golden threads that bind the 4 servant songs together.

Firstly, (1) there is a grand difficulty that comes upon the servant as His labours increase. As His own work develops, He finds that the trial that comes upon Him becomes steadily more intense and steadily more difficult; and yet, just as there is that increasing intensity of His own service, so, (2) there is the strengthening of His own resolve that He will carry those labours through. Finally, (3) there is the determination of God Himself who overshadows the servant, so that at all times, He might ensure that His servant will ultimately be vindicated and protected.

Let's just have a look at that, shall we? in terms of the theme; so, just a summary then, ESSENTIAL THEME WITHIN THE SONGS IS THE GRADUAL INCREASE AND INTENSITY OF THE SERVANTS LABOURS. As the demands of service deepen, only One is left who rises to the heights of these ideals, and He especially, is worthy of the title 'the servant of Yahweh'.

So let's have a look at the 4 songs and put them together side by side because here, you see, is the theme developing.

So in Song #1 we will find that the servant is subject to trial and to labour. Just a hint of that, no more, just the idea that there will be difficulties that lie ahead.

By the time we come to Song #2, we will find that this man is subject to far more than simply the hint of trial, that there is anguish, anguish of spirit that comes upon Him and a definite feeling of the weakness of His physical powers, as they're emptied out in the course of His labours. He feels that, He laments over that!

By the time we come to Song #3, we find that that which has been merely anguish in Song #2, develops now to the point where He is subject to shame and to outright hostility, as the demands of His service increase.

And lastly, in Song #4 we are going to read that this One is subject to rejection and that rejection will lead finally to His physical death. The hostility of others about Him and around Him and against Him, has grown to the point now where He loses His life in the pursuit of His work as the servant of God.

Do you see how there's the deepening of ideas here, running through these four songs, and just as the deepening of the ideas in terms of the trials that He will experience, so there is a strengthening of the very character of the servant Himself. Look at this, this is what we're going to see as the songs grow, you see!

In the first Song, He's ignored and doubted, but He's wonderfully patient. It's one of the most amazing things about the Servant in the first Song, is that He has a lovely spirit of patience, as He goes about His labours. But He needs more than patience if He is to complete His work.

In the second Song, we shall find that He is scorned and ridiculed, and yet somehow, remarkably, this Servant is quietly confident, that He will succeed in the prosecution of His work.

In the third Song, that is deepened yet again, to the point where now He is tormented and opposed and yet He is resolutely steadfast, nothing will deviate this man from His purpose; by the time, b&s and young people, we come to that third Song, there's something almost frightening in the intensity of this man's convictions.

And in the final Song, we shall see Him stricken and killed, but triumphant in spirit, as the result of the hand of His God upon Him. And that's the third idea, you see the hand of God upon His servant, because you see, in the first Song what we'll find is that one of the key themes is GOD'S POWER TO DIRECT AND LEAD HIS SERVANT; God promises that, God's power is to direct and lead this man through all the trials and difficulties that He will be asked to endure. But in the second Song that is developed to the point now, where the theme and the emphasis of the second Song is on God's power to strengthen and to sustain His servant in times of difficulty and distress. In the third Song, that has now grown to the point, where the theme is GOD'S POWER TO PROTECT AND VINDICATE THIS MAN against terrible odds, and distressing hostility. Finally, in the last Song we shall find God's power gloriously revealed to redeem and to

award His servant, so that whatever may have been seen as failure, will ultimately be seen, ultimately be resolved as wonderful triumph at the conclusion of the Songs, and at the conclusion of the Servant's labours. So you see, there's something really interesting about these Songs, they grow, they grow in intensity as we move through the divine record and contemplate the work of this marvellous man, whoever He might be!

You know, the Lord Jesus Christ, I think in a way, gave reference to this idea of the deepening demands of service; just come and look at the bottom of the overhead there, at Mark chapter 10, because I think that the Lord Himself made reference to this idea, the fact that He recognized that in the work of service before God, there would be a deepening of the demands laid upon the servant that He might be faithful. Mark chapter 10, and of course, Mark is the right gospel to take it from, isn't it? why is Mark the right gospel to quote from in this context? Because Mark is the gospel of the ox, the face of the servant, so this is the servant gospel, the gospel that portrays Christ from the standpoint of His service and His ministry and here has to be, by the way I think, a key passage in the gospel of Mark, and this is what he says. Reading from verse 42, 'Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many'. Now I want you to notice the words particularly of verses 43 and 44, because I think we've got a development of ideas here, just have a look at it; verse 43, 'whosoever will be great' now how is that contrasted in verse 44, 'whosoever of you who will be the chiefest', now which of those two statements do you think is the strongest? whoso will be great or whoso will be chiefest? which is the strongest of the two? It's the second, isn't it? whoso will be chiefest. To be great is one thing but to be the chiefest, the absolute chiefest; the word 'chiefest' here in the Greek 'protos' (4413) which means 'to be the foremost in time, in place, in order or in importance'; whoso will be great but whosoever will be the first, so you see, there is an increasing sense here!

Now what does the Lord go on to say? Well, He says in verse 43, 'Whosoever will be great' shall learn to become your minister', and the word 'minister' here is 'diakonos' (1249) in the Greek, and 'diakonos' means 'to be an attendant', to be a menial engaged in menial occupations. But in verse 44 it says, 'whosoever of you will be chiefest, shall be servant of all, and this time the word 'servant' is not 'diakonos' in the Greek, it's 'doulos' (1401) a bond slave. You see, it's a far stronger word than the word 'minister' in the previous verse; and do you see the last point of contrast, verse 43, 'whosoever will be great among you (the disciples), let him be an 'diakonos' a minister; but whosoever desireth to be 'the first', well, says the Lord, they who get desire to be the foremost of all, must learn to become 'bond slaves', of whom? Not just the disciples, but of 'ALL' says Christ. So you see how we've got the deepening demands of service here, and we're going to come back to this passage, by the way, because there's a remarkable paradox here, isn't there? How on earth could it possibly be that 'greatness' is found in the 'humility of service'? And that's a riddle that the Lord has propounded for the

disciples to seek and to understand, and we also shall learn to understand that riddle, if we're to come to understand the secret of the Servant Songs and what they teach us in terms of our own lives in the truth before Almighty God.

So Christ Himself was aware of this idea of the deepening demands of service that would lead finally in His own case, in His own life, to becoming the bond slave of all, and yet He also would be the chiefest, would He not? the chiefest among 10,000 as the Song of Solomon is going to describe Him. So you see, the great question then, of the Servant Songs, the burning question coming back to Isaiah then, the question then is, 'who was the servant? Of whom speaketh the prophet? because we know what the test of a prophet was-Deuteronomy 18 and verse 22, what was the test of a prophet? 'if his words come to pass, then we know that that prophet is true; if his words don't come to pass, then we know that he is a liar'. So the great question was in terms of the Servant Songs of Isaiah, that you see, Isaiah could not have prophesied these in a vacuum; none of the prophets prophesied in a vacuum, they prophesied concerning real people and real events, and somehow in some way the words of the prophet Isaiah must have come to pass in his own day, so that people could say Isaiah was right; the words have been fulfilled, he is a true prophet, we have tested him.

So who did Isaiah have in mind? The answer is, but you see, I think Isaiah gives us his own clues to who he had in mind; because you probably know that smack in the middle of the prophecy of Isaiah, which is a prophecy, isn't it? It's the prophecy of Isaiah, we call it the prophecy of Isaiah, and yet right in the middle of the book of Isaiah, just before the Servant prophecies begin, the prophet abruptly stops being a prophet, and for 4 chapters becomes an historian. Now where are those chapters? where does Isaiah suddenly become an historian? in the middle of his book, chapters 36 to 39, which by the way, is just before the servant prophecies begin. And what are Isaiah 36, 37, 38 and 39, what are these 4 chapters of history all about? The answer is they are about one particular man at the greatest crisis of his life, and his name was Hezekiah, good king Hezekiah of Judah. I believe, that the servant of these songs in the day of the prophet was none other than Hezekiah of Judah. He was the role model upon which these songs were built and out of which these songs were born. Yes, I know these songs are all going to come forward into the New Testament and they're going to become the songs of the work of Jesus Christ, we understand that, and one of the things we're going to do, God willing, in these studies is trace the ideas through into the New Testament record, so we can see the fulfilment in the life of Christ, but they had to have a beginning; and the beginning is the life of the man who was the king at the time that the prophet prophesied these things, and his name was Hezekiah.

Now, by the way, you can see the result of this! come and have a look at Isaiah 1, you see, here is the skill and the cunning of the bible committee for this particular school. Did you notice this, in Isaiah 1 verse 1 it says this, 'The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah'. Now our first studies in the morning through brother Roger, Isaiah chapters 1 to 6, are essentially a block of chapters that are set, we believe, in the time and in the

reign of Uzziah. And the second set of studies that we're looking at through brother David, of course, is Isaiah 7 to 12, the Emmanuel prophecies and as we saw from his introductory study today, we believe, that they are set in the days of Ahaz. Well in our third series we're going to come across a set of prophecies in the book of Isaiah that are firmly based on the life of Hezekiah, so we've got a pretty good spread, really haven't we? of what we're going to be looking at in the book of Isaiah in the course of these three studies. We're going to come across the 3 kings, the 3 great kings, and they're all encompassed in the words of Isaiah chapter 1 verse 1 which says that Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of these particular men, and we're going to look at the life of Hezekiah.

You may have seen this particular overhead before, if you have, it doesn't matter, if you haven't, well, so much the better. But this is a summary of two remarkable chapters in Isaiah which really ought to be read side by side, and when you do read them side by side you'll suddenly see the point of what we're saying. We describe these as THE WRITING and THE REPORT. The writing is what is described as the writing of Hezekiah in Isaiah 38 (let's just come and have a look at that for a moment, shall we? Isaiah 38 says this in verse 9, 'The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness', so here's what the king penned at the time of his miraculous recovery; and now on the other side of this same overhead we had 'the words of the report of Messiah' Isaiah 53, 'Who hath believed our report?' are the words of Isaiah 53 verse 1, so now what we're going to do is compare these as two documents. What we do when we compare these two writings as documents, is that we find there's a remarkable collation of ideas; a man who was smitten, who was going to die, who waxed sore, who was cut off from the gates of the grave, cut off from the land of the living, whose age had departed and yet, somehow we suddenly find that these are all the words of Isaiah 53, a man who was smitten of God, who experienced sorrow, who was cut out of the land of the living, who lost his generation. It's all the same story, b&s, the identical story, the story of Isaiah 38 is the same story as Isaiah 53, and yet we know that Isaiah 53 is a prophecy of the sufferings of Messiah; but it just also happens to be the last, the fourth, the final servant song. In it's first fulfilment it was the story of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Now the reason why I'm stressing that is because it's very important, you see, that we understand the historical background to any particular part of scripture. Whatever other applications there may be, it will help us greatly to the proper understanding of what the prophet meant, what the prophet intended, if we have some grasp of the initial fulfilment of the prophecy and what we're saying is that these songs which are all speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the first instance, had application to Hezekiah. Now let me just give you one example of that to show you how beautifully the subject works out. Now read what it says in Isaiah 38 verse 1, now have a look at this! It says, 'In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith Yahweh, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed'. We're going to come across this later on in the songs, you see, we're going to see this

exact moment in Hezekiah's life. I want you to consider the drama of this moment, b&s, and young people, do you know what it says in verse 1 of Isaiah 38? You see, the prophet came to the king and said, 'Set thy house in order for thou shalt die and not live', and the great tragedy of Isaiah 38 verse 1, is that there was no house to set in order, was there? because he had never married. He didn't have any house, and I think, when Isaiah the prophet came to Hezekiah on that day and asked him to do that, I think it suddenly smote Hezekiah with the force of a sledge-hammer, that to all the other trials of life he had been involved in, he had endangered the Davidic line of whom he was the king and the living representative of the day. He personally had failed in the matter of raising up a godly seed, that the line of David could be preserved. This is the very line of Messiah! and he, Hezekiah had not married, to ensure that the throne might be preserved, that the seed might be continued; he was in a desperate position indeed, wasn't he? at this moment.

So he cried, and verse 3 says at the end of the verse, 'Hezekiah wept sore and then came the Word of Yahweh to Isaiah saying, 'Go and say to Hezekiah, thus saith Yahweh, the God of David thy father'. Oh, now why do you think it would mention that, just at this particular episode of time? unless this is the very thing that's on the king's mind, the very circumstance that was the greatest cause of lamentation for Hezekiah, the God of David thy father. You see, this was the thing he hadn't done! This was the responsibility of kingship that he had not fulfilled, and when those dreadful words came tolling upon him by the sonorous sound of the prophet, 'Set thy house in order for thou shalt die and not live', I think Hezekiah must have come here to one of the most dreadful, dreadful moments in his entire life, as he turned his face to the wall alone in his bedchamber, smitten with illness and prayed passionately to his God.

And what do you think the nation felt about their king? Well, we'll come to that, but you see, in the middle of all that crisis, now come and have a look at Isaiah 53; in the middle of all that crisis when the king lay prostrate upon his bed, and even the nation had begun to doubt the wisdom or the righteousness of their king. Even the nation thought that maybe Hezekiah had been smitten by God as a punishment. In the middle of that, a prophet stood up and said these words in the middle of Isaiah 53 and verse 10, 'He hath put Him to grief, when thou shalt make a solemn offering for sin, but I say unto you, saith the prophet Isaiah, and mark my words well, says the prophet to all the nation. You see, the king, says Isaiah, well, I promise you this, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong your days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand'. Do you see the drama of those words? you see, to whom is it the greatest importance that they see their seed? but a king! Of whom is it terribly important that they ought to prolong their days? but a king! and as far as the kings of Israel and Judah were concerned, the vital ingredient of their reigns is that the pleasure of the LORD, needed to prosper in their hands. You see, all these words in Isaiah 53 verse 10 are all special things about kings, that they might see their seed, that they might prolong their days, and that the pleasure of God might prosper in their hands; and here is the king languishing in his bedchamber and the prophet stands up and says to all the nation, 'mark my words, the king will recover, he will see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and God's purpose shall

prosper in his hand. You see, that was a remarkable thing, a remarkable set of predictions for the prophet to make at that time.

Do you know what happened, b&s? do you know what happened in the outworking of this story? We're told in 2 Kings 20 verse 21, and chapter 21 verse 1, 'Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead. Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzibah'. The divine record tells us that remarkably Hezekiah did finally marry, he married a wonderful woman called Hephzibah, and Josephus tells us that Hephzibah was none other than the daughter of Isaiah the prophet! They had a boy, and before Hezekiah died, he saw his seed, and the words of the prophet came to pass, did they not? in the days of the prophet himself, because this prophecy wasn't first about the Lord Jesus Christ, it was about a man named Hezekiah languishing on the bed of his sickness.

What was the second promise of Isaiah 53? 'he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and 2 Kings 20 verses 5 and 6 says, 'Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold, I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD and I will add unto thy days (he shall prolong his days) 15 years'. The words of the prophet came to pass! did they not? and the king's life was miraculously prolonged, and in those 15 years, oh, what a lot of things happened in the nation in those 15 years including a great deal of spiritual activity which we'll look at, God willing, later on in the course of our studies.

And what was the third thing that the prophet promised in that chapter of Isaiah 53? he shall see his seed, he shall prosper, and, do you know what it says in 2 Chronicles 32 verse 30 after the recovery of the king? It says 'this same Hezekiah also stopped the upper course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered (same word) in all his works'. You see, that phrase in 2 Chronicles 32 is taken from the 15 years of life that were added to the king; and in those years says the Chronicle, the labours of this man prospered, exactly as the prophet had said, and Isaiah's words came to pass in his own day and all Israel knew that this man Isaiah was established to be a prophet of the LORD. Oh yes, this was a remarkable story that would work its way up in the very life of Hezekiah himself! What we're going to learn in these studies, is just how great a man Hezekiah was; tremendously important figure in the history of the nation.

Here is a man whose life is expounded in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, in the book of Isaiah and in the book of Psalms. The Jewish Talmud ascribes to Hezekiah the final compilation of the book of Job, the book of Psalms, the book of Proverbs, the book of Song of Solomon, the book of Ecclesiastes, the whole poetical section of the bible, was put together, we believe, by Hezekiah. God willing on Tuesday night, we're going to spend some time looking at Hezekiah and the Psalter, and the wonderful influence that king had on the bringing together of the book of Psalms and then we're going to see how that our own hymn book, we believe, takes up the very heritage of the book of

Psalms of old, and we're going to see Hezekiah's influence as it lies like a shadow across our own hymn book. I'm going to introduce you to the hymns of Hezekiah which you may have never sung before, but we'll sing them, God willing, from Tuesday night onwards with a little further understanding.

Do you know that Rabbi Hillel, a famous rabbi of later times, had this to say, he said, 'Israel shall have no more Messiah, for they have had Him in the days of Hezekiah'. Now we know, of course, that that is not true but what it does tell us is that there was a sense in the nation, an understanding in the nation that this man was, in certain respects a remarkable type of Messiah Himself, and God willing, that's what we're going to try and do in terms of tracing out the course of these studies.

So what are we going to try and do then in the consideration of the servant songs? We're going to try and find, first of all, the basis of each song in the life of Hezekiah. Then we're going to establish the divine principles that are to be found in that song, so that we can see the application in the life of Christ. Finally, now you stop and think about it, you see, I think we miss a lot with Messianic studies; have you ever looked at a psalm and someone says, 'Oh, that's Messianic!' and do you know what we do as a result of that, we say that relates to Christ, not us! and we somehow imagine there's no application to the psalms of Messiah in our own lives. Of course there are applications, b&s, and here's the proof, these are songs of Christ and yet they were born out of the life circumstances of another man! So if these songs could begin with the life of Hezekiah and yet point forward to Christ, why can't they apply also in our own lives? The answer is, they can! they shall! they must! and at the conclusion of each study, God willing, what we're going to do is we're going to go to the New Testament and we're going to find a wonderful New Testament passage that takes up the spirit of each song, brings it forward into the New Testament and applies it, not to Christ, not to Hezekiah, but to ourselves, so that we can capture the spirit of the songs in our own lives, and thereby more perfectly echo the life of Messiah ourselves. The songs, b&s and young people, are the story of trial, the story of effort, the story of discipline, the story of tremendous distress and terrible anguish, but also of great joy and exaltation of spirit. We hope to learn all those things, as in the words of the prophet, 'we come to behold His servant'!