

Marks Gospel - Study 3

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The Servant King

Background Briefing

In this study - which might take quite a bit of work - we're going to take a look at some of the background to the ministry of Jesus. If Jesus had a favourite section of the Old Testament, it would have to be the middle section of the book of Isaiah, which runs from chapter 40 to 55. Here, Isaiah looks forward to the time **God's people will come home from their exile, forgiven and free**, led by a **pure-hearted "Servant."**

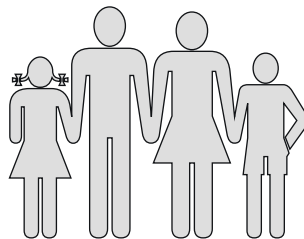
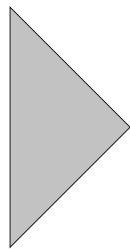
It's a complicated section. As God's people, all of Israel was meant to be God's "pure hearted servant." "But you, O Israel my servant... I took you from the ends of the earth... I said, "You are my servant"; I have chosen you and not rejected you." (Isa 41:8-9) But as we've seen time and time again, Israel failed to be God's pure hearted servant. So, Isaiah says, there will be a faithful remnant - and **they** will be "the servant."

By the time we get to Jesus, it becomes clear that this "faithful Israel" only has one member. "The Servant" is Jesus himself! Mark's gospel shows us this in a number of very clever ways.

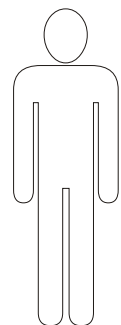
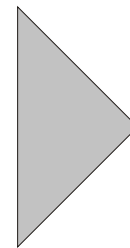
The "Servant"



All Israel



Only the really
faithful Israelites



Jesus

Take the Challenge...

This week, we're going to read all the way through Isaiah 40 to 55, looking for the things that Jesus used as pointers to himself. This is his "script" - and he wants people to understand who he is, and what his mission is, by linking his actions and words with the things spoken of by Isaiah.

It would be best if you tried to read a small section each day. The more familiar you are with the words of Isaiah, the more you'll understand what Jesus is doing. Explore! You'll see "The Servant" referred to quite often, in each of the three ways shown above. Sometimes it gets confusing... but remember, we're simply hunting for words and ideas that Jesus picks up and uses in Mark.

Note to growth group and home group members:

If you haven't prepared before the group meets, maybe you could split up during the meeting, and a few people could look at each section in Isaiah and report back at the end. However, it would be MUCH BETTER if you could spend the time reading Isaiah during the week.



Day 1

Read Isaiah 40 and 41. Mark in your bible, or list here, anything that reminds you of things Jesus says or does.



Guided Tour Highlights

1. When Mark opens his gospel with the words of Isaiah 40:3-4, he expects his readers to know the context. What does Isaiah say happens NEXT? (v5). What will be seen, and who will see it?

How does Mark show this in the rest of his gospel?

(If you haven't read Mark before, just browse through and take a look at some of the headings!)

2. According to Isaiah 40:9-10, someone will be bringing "good tidings" (good news) to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. (Zion is the hill Jerusalem is built on.) What is the announcement?

Find the times this "gospel" or "good news" is referred to in Mark 1. For those thinking of Isaiah as they read Mark, what "announcement" will come to their minds?

3. Isaiah 40:11 gives a warm image of what this visitor will be like. What do you notice in Mark 6:34?

The rest of Isaiah 40 paints an awesome picture of the power of God - all present in the one who will come! Reflect on the awesome power and authority that Jesus had at his fingertips!



Day 2

Meet the Servant! Read Isaiah 42 and 43. Again, list any verses that remind you of things Jesus says or does, before looking at the guided tour highlights



Guided Tour Highlights

1. Isaiah 42:1 ("my chosen one in whom I delight") uses almost the same words as the words from heaven when Jesus is being baptised (Mark 1) What other similarity is there?

2. Jesus keeps on telling people not to tell about his miracles in Mark. (Can you find some examples of this?) How could Isaiah 42:2 help us understand this? What about 42:14?

3. How (in Mark's gospel) does Jesus fulfil Isaiah 42:7? How will the physical act of healing a blind person illustrate something deeper than he comes to do (from 42:6-7)?

4. How has "servant Israel" (the BIG GROUP in the diagram) failed to listen and understand? (Isaiah 42:18-20)? What was the result? (23-25).

What does Jesus find in Mark's gospel? (Has Israel changed at all?)

(Can you find references in Mark to "Seeing but not seeing, hearing but not understanding?")

5. Can you think of an incident in Mark's gospel which would remind you of Isaiah 43:2? (Maybe more than one?) What about Isaiah 43:16? (A tricky one... what about 43:24?)

Day 3

Read Isaiah 44 and 45, again noting anything that reminds you of Jesus. Then take the guided tour.



Guided Tour Highlights

1. How does 44:3 remind you of what John the Baptist says Jesus will do? (Mark 1)
2. Idols are no help at all, according to Isaiah. But what does God plan for his servant people Israel, according to 44:22? How is he going to do this?
3. According to Isaiah 45, King Cyrus of Babylon is going to set the captive Israelites free and let them rebuild their shattered cities. But the new Kingdom of God will not just be for Israelites. According to Isaiah 45:22-23, who else should join in? Watch for hints of this in Mark!

Day 4

Read Isaiah 46 to 48. Much of these chapters are taken up criticising the false gods of Babylon, where Israel is in exile. But Babylon will fall! It must have been hard to imagine at this point that there was any future for Jerusalem. Babylon's towers and gardens were considered "wonders" of the ancient world. Jerusalem was derelict. It seemed the idols of Babylon were stronger than the God of Israel. But only the true God can say with authority what is going to happen! Watch for, and note, God's promises for the future.



Guided Tour Highlights

1. According to 46:13, what does the future hold for Israel and Zion (the mountain where Jerusalem is built)?
2. According to Isaiah 48:1-5, not all who call themselves "Israel" are interested in listening to God. What does the future hold for those who don't?

Day 5

Read Isaiah 49 and 50. The Servant is in the spotlight again. As usual, make a note of anything that reminds you of Jesus.

**Guided Tour Highlights**

1. According to 49:5-6, what is the first task of “the servant”? (“Jacob” and “Israel” are the ancestors of the people of Israel. They represent all the “descendants of Abraham” who make up the nation.)

What bigger role is there than just “restoring Israel”?

In Mark 7:24-30, Jesus meets a woman from Syrian-Phoenecia. She is certainly not a descendant of Abraham! How does Jesus demonstrate that a) he has come to the Jews first, but b) gentiles are included too?

2. Isaiah 49:8 says that in the day of salvation, certain things will happen. One example is given in 49:9. What event in Mark’s gospel does this remind you of? (It happens twice!)

3. What treatment does the servant receive for his faithfulness to God?

How should we expect Jesus to be treated if this is the case?

What details does Mark record in his account of the trial of Jesus that bring to mind Isaiah 50:6?

What decision is called for in Isaiah 50:10?

Day 6

Read Isaiah 51 to 53. Isaiah 53 is one of the most famous Old Testament passages. As usual, note anything that reminds you of the way Jesus is described by Mark.

**Guided Tour Highlights**

1. If God can do what he says in Isaiah 51:15, what else can he do? How does Jesus demonstrate this? (4:35-41). What is the answer to the disciples question in Mark 4:41?

2. In Isaiah 51:22, God says he has “taken the cup of his wrath” from the hands of his people so they will not have to drink it again. Jesus prays in Mark 14:36 about “the cup” he is about to drink. Why will the cup NOT be taken from Jesus?

3. How does Isaiah 52:13-15 describe the results of the mission of Jesus. Those who see, or don’t, and understand, or don’t, (v15) are often mentioned in Mark. Can you find any reference to them?

4. Can you think of examples in Mark where Isaiah 53:3 is fulfilled?

5. When Jesus touches a leper, he is made unclean. When he touches a bleeding woman, he is made unclean. What is he doing, according to Isaiah 53:4?

6. What was the purpose of the suffering of the servant in Isaiah 53? Think through the details in the chapter, and how they help understand the death of Jesus.

Day 7

Read Isaiah 54 and 55, and think through the invitation God makes to you through Jesus, and the future blessing this promises. Pray, giving thanks for these things.