

TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT JESUS

42 Look at my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I will put my Spirit upon him; he will bring justice to the Gentile nations. 2He will not shout or cry or raise his voice in the streets. 3He will not break a bruised reed, nor will he snuff out a smoldering wick. He will faithfully bring forth justice. 4He will not falter or be discouraged until he has established justice on the earth. Even the distant islands will wait [expectantly] for his law.

5This is what God Jehovah says—he who created the heavens and stretched them out, he who spread out the earth and all that it produces, he who gives breath to the people who are in it and life to those who walk upon it—6I, Jehovah, have called you by my righteousness, and I will hold your hand. I will watch over you and appoint you to be the covenant [representative] for the people [of Israel and] a light for the Gentiles. 7[I have appointed you] to open the eyes of the blind, to free the captives from prison, and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. 8I am Jehovah, that is my name. I will not give my glory to any other, nor my praise to carved images. 9See, the former things [which I foretold] have happened, and [now] I declare new things—before they spring into being I announce them to you. 10Sing a new song to Jehovah, sing his praise from the end of the earth. [Sing his praise,] you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it. [Sing his praise,] you islands, and all who live on them. 11Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices—the villages where Kedar lives. Let the people of Sela sing; let them shout from the mountaintops. 12Let them give glory to Jehovah, and let them declare his praise in the islands.

13Jehovah will march out like a mighty man; he will stir up his zeal like a warrior. With a shout he will raise the battle cry; he will triumph mightily over his enemies. 14For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and restrained myself. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant. 15I will devastate the mountains and the hills, I will dry up all their vegetation. I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools [of water]. 16I will lead the blind along a way they have not known, I will guide them along unfamiliar paths. I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. I will [surely] do these things; I will not forsake them. 17[But] those who trust in carved images—those who confess to molten images, “You are our gods”—they will be turned back and utterly put to shame. (Isa. 42:1-17)

Introduction

This present passage of Scripture begins with the LORD pointing us to His Servant, whom the New Testament reveals to be the Lord Jesus Christ, and commanding us, *“Look at my servant!”*

Do we need to hear and heed this divine commandment today? The commandment to take a good look at Jesus?

Maybe we have lost sight of Jesus; perhaps our attention has been diverted by the busyness of life or by a pressing problem, or by a new adventure, or a promising relationship.

Maybe you need to focus on Jesus for the first time: you attend church, you seek to live an upright life, but you sense that spiritually you are missing the mark, your life lacks true peace and joy, you do not know the blessing of sins forgiven, you do not have a living relationship with the LORD—if this describes you, you need to look to Jesus.

The LORD knows that, like those Old Testament people of Israel, we, too, are so prone to lose sight of Jesus; and therefore the commandment comes to us, too: *“Look at my servant!”* Take a good look at Jesus! Refocus on the Lord Jesus, or focus upon Him for the first time.

I. Take a Good Look at Jesus, and Appreciate His Character (Isa. 42:1-4)

The LORD’s servant *“will not shout or cry or raise his voice in the streets”* (vs. 2.) That is to say, the LORD’s servant will not be a political activist or revolutionary who exerts His charismatic power to rouse the masses to violence. Consider Jesus’ words to Peter when Peter sought to resort to violence and arms as the means of defending Jesus and bringing to power the kingdom of God:

“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” [*“this way”* meaning the way of the cross] (Matt. 26:52-54)

In Revelation 5:5-6a, when the apostle John’s attention is directed to the conquering Christ—*“the Lion of the tribe of Judah”*—what he sees is *“a Lamb”* (the symbol of meek submission.) The point being made is that Christ conquered not by self-assertion, but rather by submission to the Father’s will—that will being nothing other than the cross of Calvary.

Take a good look at Jesus; see that true spiritual victory comes not by self-assertion and reliance upon human strength, but by His cross and submission to His Father’s will. Salvation is attained not by trying harder to become pleasing to God, but by trusting in the crucified Savior: *“It is by grace that you have been saved through faith—and this is not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God—⁹it is not of works, therefore no one can boast”* (Eph. 2:8-9.) Sanctification, the processes of becoming more like Christ our Savior, is achieved not by resorting to our own strength in an effort to become holy, but by relying upon the Holy Spirit and the grace of God: *“if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live”* (Rom. 8:13.) The kingdom of God is advanced, not by means of political power or resorting to violence, but by resorting to prayer and the laying down of our lives in imitation of Christ our Savior. Note: This does not mean surrendering involvement in favor of inactivity; rather it means the abandoning of reliance upon human power and wisdom and relying upon divine power and wisdom.

It is further said of the LORD's servant, *"He will not break a bruised reed, nor will he snuff out a smoldering wick"* (vs. 3.) This is to say, the LORD's Servant is characterized by gentleness, tenderness, patience and compassion. Consider how these attributes characterized the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ:

A man with leprosy came up to him, kneeling down before him and begging him, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹Being moved with compassion, [Jesus] stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be made clean." (Mk. 1:40-41)

*And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all types of disease and all kinds of sickness. ³⁶But when he saw the multitudes, **he was moved with compassion** for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. (Matt. 9:35-36)*

Take a good look at Jesus: see that you will find Him to be merciful and compassionate, and recognize that He calls us as His disciples to become like Himself:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls; ³⁰for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:28-30)

The LORD's servant *"will not falter or be discouraged until he has established justice on the earth. Even the distant islands will wait [expectantly] for his law" [or, "his teaching"]* (vs. 4.) The LORD's servant will persevere in the work God gave Him to do, and He shall accomplish that work, note Luke 9:51-53,

As the time approached for him to be received up, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵²And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. [literally, "his face was set for going to Jerusalem"] (Lk. 9:51-53)

The fact that the islands shall wait for (or hope in) His law (or, his teaching) testifies to the fact that His redeeming work is not just for Israel. It also testifies to the success of His mission: even the remote regions of the world shall hear His teaching (the gospel) and put their hope in Him: *"the gospel, ⁶that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing"* (Col. 1:5b-6a.)

Take a good look at Jesus: see that He has completed the work of salvation—upon the cross He cried out, *"It is finished!"* (Jn. 19:30.) Be assured that good work He has begun in us who have believed in Him will be completed: *"he who began a good work in you will carry it out to completion until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Phil.

1:6.) Confidently look to Him for the grace (the divine strength) to carry on in your Christian life: *"be strong in the Lord and in his mighty strength"* (Eph. 6:10.)

Take a good look at Jesus, and appreciate His character: His submission to His Father's will; His compassion; His perseverance. Recognize the eternal benefits you may derive from Him: He has done all that is needed to secure your salvation, He welcomes you with open arms, and He will preserve your soul. Recognize, too, that it is the LORD's will that His character be reproduced in each one of us who believe in Him.

II. Take a Good Look at Jesus, and Place Your Confidence in Him (Isa. 42:5-9)

Listen to how the LORD identifies Himself in Isaiah 42:5,

"This is what God Jehovah says—he who created the heavens and stretched them out, he who spread out the earth and all that it produces, he who gives breath to the people who are in it and life to those who walk upon it."

Literally, the LORD declares Himself to be *"the God"* (יְהוָה), the one and only God. In Isaiah 45:22 the LORD will declare, *"Turn to me and be saved, [you people from] all the ends of the earth; because I am God, and there is none other."* Furthermore, He is *"Jehovah"*—the Living One who is wholly self-sufficient and the source of all life, the One who is the covenant God, faithful to all His promises. Verse 5 of Isaiah 42 goes on to identify Him as the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and all things.

Now hear how the LORD describes His relationship to His servant, as it is recorded in verses 6-8. *"I, Jehovah, have called you"*—it is God Himself who has given His servant a divine commission and task to perform. Note the testimony and the prayer of the Lord Jesus:

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." (Jn. 4:34)

I glorified you on the earth by accomplishing the work you have given me to do. (Jn. 17:4)

The LORD goes on to assert, *"I, Jehovah ... will hold your hand"*—God assures His servant that He will support him and sustain Him so that he may carry out and accomplish His divine mission. Again, note the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The one who sent me is with me, he has not forsaken me; because I always do the things that are pleasing to him. (Jn. 8:29)

Listen, the hour is coming, in fact it has come, when you shall be scattered, each one to his own home, and shall forsake me. However, I am not forsaken, because the Father is with me. (Jn. 16:32)

The LORD's testimony to His servant continues, "*I, Jehovah ... will watch over you*"—the LORD assures His servant that He will be faithful to him, He will not abandon him. The fulfillment of this promise is to be seen in the resurrection, the ascension, and finally the return in glory of Christ in glory:

God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵David said about him: ... you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay ... ³²God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit ... (Acts 2:24-25,32-33)

Next the LORD declares to His servant:

I, Jehovah ... will ... appoint you to be the covenant [representative] for the people [of Israel and] a light for the Gentiles. ⁷[I have appointed you] to open the eyes of the blind, to free the captives from prison, and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. (Isa. 42:6b-7)

The LORD's servant, Jesus Christ, will be the true covenant Representative of Israel: fulfilling the covenantal demand of obedience and taking upon Himself the covenantal curse for the disobedience of God's people, and thus enabling all those who trust in Him to inherit the covenantal blessing. Note the Apostle Paul's explanation of Christ's work:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree—¹⁴so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, and so that we might receive the promised Spirit by faith. (Gal. 3:13-14)

The LORD's servant shall also reveal the light (the truth and glory) of God to the nations, so that they might also be reconciled to God through faith in Him and come to share in the blessings of the covenant. Again, note the Apostle Paul's testimony with regard to the ministry he received from the resurrected Jesus:

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," the Lord replied. ¹⁶"Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷... I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:15-18)

In verse 8 the LORD supplies the reason why He will cause His servant to be a light for the Gentiles; namely, for the sake of His own honor and glory. *“I am Jehovah, that is my name. I will not give my glory to any other, nor my praise to carved images.”* The proclamation of the gospel is a gracious revelation of God’s truth, calling men back to Himself; note 1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10. In response to the gospel, the Thessalonians *“turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God,¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*

In verse 9 the LORD points to the fulfillment of past prophecies as the assurance that these present promises will likewise be fulfilled: *“See, the former things [that I foretold] have happened, and [now] I declare new things—before they spring into being I announce them to you.”* The LORD is both able and faithful to fulfill all His promises. We can rest with complete confidence in Christ our Savior, because there has been pledged to Him the support of Almighty God Himself.

Take a good look at Jesus, and place your confidence in Him, knowing that God His Father, the Almighty God, stands beside Him and behind Him to bless His work and guarantee the salvation of those who trust in Him:

My sheep respond to my voice; I know them and they follow me.²⁸ I give them eternal life—they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.³⁰ I and the Father are one. (Jn. 10:27-30)

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake,
I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake.
(Author Unknown)

III. Take a Good Look at Jesus, and Praise the Lord for Him (Isa. 42:10-17)

In verses 10-12 there goes forth the command that songs of praise be offered up to the LORD from all around the world:

Sing a new song to Jehovah, sing his praise from the end of the earth. [Sing his praise,] you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it. [Sing his praise,] you islands, and all who live on them.¹¹ Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices—the villages where Kedar lives. Let the people of Sela sing; let them shout from the mountaintops.¹² Let them give glory to Jehovah, and let them declare his praise in the islands. (Isa. 42:10-12)

Verse 13 supplies the reason why a new song of praise is to be sung to the LORD; namely, because the LORD shall rise up and exert His triumphant power over His enemies. The LORD will mightily exert Himself; He will arise as a mighty warrior to triumph over His enemies. *“He will stir up his zeal”*—His jealousy for His Name, His cause, His people, has, as it were, lay silently smoldering under the ashes, but now the LORD stirs it up into a bright flame with His mighty saving acts. Note the mysterious ways of God: at His appointed time the LORD bestirs Himself from relative “inactivity” to sudden, intense, violent action on behalf of His cause, His kingdom, and His people. Examples of such times include the Exodus, the Return from the Babylonian Exile, the first coming of Christ, times of revival throughout church history, and the final coming of Christ in glory.

Verses 14-17 elaborate on this theme. The LORD declares that for a long time He has been still, but now He will rise up and exert His triumphant power. He compares Himself to a woman crying out with birth pains as she is about to deliver a child (vs. 14.) In verse 15 the previous image of a woman giving birth and producing new life is counterbalanced with an image of destruction and desolation. Thus we are graphically reminded that the work of God always and inevitably contains the two dimensions of salvation **and** judgment. By way of example, the Exodus proved to be both the salvation of the LORD’s people—passing safely through the parted waters of the Red Sea—as well as the destruction of His enemies—the pursuing Egyptians were swallowed up by the waters of the sea. So shall it be at His final coming, that great event will mean both the final redemption of those who trust in Christ, as well as the final judgment of those who remain in their state of sinful alienation from their God. Verses 16-17, for emphasis, reiterate this theme. The LORD will redeem His people from the darkness of sin and idolatry (vs. 16.) But He will confound and overthrow those who cling to their idols and refuse to give to the LORD the glory due His Name (vs. 17.)

Take a good look at Jesus, and praise the LORD for Him, because it is through His servant, the Lord Jesus Christ, that the LORD accomplishes His great works of redemption and righteous judgment.

Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom he desires [to give life].²² Neither does the Father judge anyone; rather, he has entrusted all judgment to the Son;²³ so that everyone may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent him. (Jn. 5:21-23)

Conclusion

At the very outset of this passage, the LORD commands us to take a good look at His servant, the Lord Jesus Christ, declaring, *“Look at my servant!”* The LORD knows that we are very prone to lose sight of Jesus; that is why He issues the command, *“Look at my servant!”*

Maybe you have lost sight of Jesus and need to refocus on Him. Maybe you need to focus on Jesus for the first time: look beyond religion and tradition, look beyond yourself, and take a good look at Jesus.

May the words of the chorus become our sincere prayer: "Open our eyes, Lord, We want to see Jesus." (Robert Cull)