

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 49:1-26

Topic

The unnamed Servant tells Israel that He has inscriptions of them on the palms of His hands.

Title

“Who Is That Marked Man? He’s The Lone Savior.”

Don’t... Don’t Dare... Don’t Dare Stare...Don’t Dare Stare at the Illustrated Man.

That’s the tagline to the awful 1969 movie based on Ray Bradbury’s awesome anthology of short stories. A former carnival freak is completely tattooed. If you stare at a tattoo **it becomes animated.**

Isaiah introduces us to a Servant. In verse sixteen the Servant says, “See, I have **inscribed** you on the palms of My hands...” Different versions of the Bible translate “inscribed” as *graven, marked, drawn, engraved, and written.*

Do Dare Stare at the tattooed man in our verses.

I’ll organize my comments around two points: **#1 The Lord’s Inscribed Hands Battle For You,** and **#2 The Lord’s Inscribed Hands Buttle For You.**

#1 - The Lord’s Inscribed Hands Battle For You (v1-7)

"See, I have inscribed **you** on the palms of My hands; Your **walls** are continually before Me." The "walls" have to be the walls of the beloved city, Jerusalem. The CEV translates this, "A picture of your city is drawn on my hand."

The servant talks about Jerusalem and the Israelites as if they were one and the same.

In the *Star Trek* original series episode, *Amok Time*, Kirk and Spock must fight to the death. Dr. McCoy tries to talk him out of it, but Kirk says, "Bones, He's my first officer and my friend. I disregarded StarFleet orders to bring him here. Another thing, that's T'Pol of Vulcan. **All of Vulcan in one package.** How can I back out in front of her?"

"All of Vulcan in one" person. That's the idea here. All of Israel in one city, Jerusalem. Stare at the inscription of the city and you 'see' every saved Israelite.

Isa 49:1 "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.

Isaiah doesn't say this person is Jesus. There are Christian commentators who suggest other possibilities. Note the descriptions of the Servant as we read and you will conclude He can only be Jesus.

The "coastlands" was an idiom to describe the limits of the known world. Salvation would be offered to Gentiles, to the whole world.

Translators didn't know the word "matrix" would make us think SyFy. It's a synonym for an *atmosphere* or a *surrounding* in which something develops. In this case it is *someone*, developing in the "matrix" that was His mother's "womb."

God the Father "called" the Servant before He was born to be the redeemer of the sin-enslaved, headed-for-second-death, perishing human race.

Isa 49:2 And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me."

He battled for us. Every moment Jesus was on earth for us He was battling. Whether it was his obscurity, for the better part of his life, or the opposition of the devil, Jesus was grappling.

The "mouth" of the Servant, His words, are like a honed "sword" and a sharpened "arrow."

These were spiritual weapons, not used to slaughter His enemies in Jesus' first coming, but to pierce hardened hearts with the Gospel.

Jesus grew up before His Heavenly Father concealed from the eyes of the world, protected in the "shadow" of God's hand. God "hid" Jesus until it was time. The majority of His life on earth was spent in a very ordinary way.

God's *time* and *timing* trouble us. In our more spiritual moments we acknowledge that God is always right on time. But when you're in the thick of it, it can seem as though He is late. *Even too late!*

Isa 49:3 "And He said to me, 'You are My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.'
Isa 49:4 Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward is with the LORD, And my work with my God.' "

The words "You are My servant, O Israel" are why some suggest that this cannot be Jesus. Other candidates are Isaiah, the nation of Israel, the believing remnant within Israel, King Cyrus, or his successor, King Darius.

In verse six the Servant is called "a light to the Gentiles." That is quoted and applied to Jesus by Simeon in Luke 2:32. Duh.

It is hard not to read this as discouragement on the Lord's part. I certainly don't want to go too far trying to describe the Lord's pure, never sinful, emotions. Nevertheless it is wrong to try to explain this away, or suggest simple solutions.

One Sunday morning in 1866, from the pulpit of his London Metropolitan Tabernacle, Charles Spurgeon shocked his congregation of 5000 by admitting, "*I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever gets to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to.*" He later described his depression as a "*seething caldron of despair.*"

On another occasion he said, "*My spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for.*" Spurgeon never did conquer his depression.

In His coming Jesus added humanity to His deity. He set His deity aside and lived as a man. Being 100% human means He experienced the emotions we do, only never

sinning. Yes, He expressed discouragement. From a strictly earthbound perspective His ministry measured a dismal failure. So will yours, either from time to time or all the time.

I'm not talking about pastors and missionaries and our supposedly stress-filled, sabbatical-seeking lives. Every believer is a minister of the Gospel, a missionary where they live & work.

There are all manner of things that will discourage you. Illness, of course, is high on the list, especially chronic. The deteriorating state of the world weighs heavy on us. Most of us at least some of the time think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. It leaves us open to discouragement. Some of you are prone to what used to be called melancholy. Sin, of course, is like a weight, crushing us.

Perspective and worldview are what is prescribed when it says, "Yet surely my just reward is with the LORD, And my work with my God."

- Your "reward" is in the "work" itself, if it is for God.
- It is "work with my God" to the extent you allow the indwelling Holy Spirit to lead you.

The foil for discouragement (or depression or whatever we are calling it) is to deeply believe the apostle Paul's analysis that "For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is far better*" (Philippians 1:21&23).

Isa 49:5 "And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength),

The mission of redeeming & restoring Israel to God will succeed. It is still in the future, coming during the Time of Jacob's Trouble when "all Israel" will be saved before the return of Jesus.

Isa 49:6 Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' "

Isa 49:7 Thus says the LORD, The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, To Him whom man despises, To Him whom the nation abhors, To the Servant of rulers: "Kings shall

see and arise, Princes also shall worship, Because of the LORD who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You."

Jesus came to His own, the Jews, and they rejected Him. He turned His followers loose upon the Gentile world offering salvation to them. It is articulated for us by the apostle Paul right at the end of the Book of Acts. "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (Acts 28:28).

Have you heard it? Are you hearing it now? Respond to the Lord.

#2 - The Lord's Inscribed Hands Buttle For You (v8-26)

It's a word; it's what butlers do.

All of this section is about what the servant is going to do for His chosen nation. We are told what He will do, not what we must do.

Isa 49:8 Thus says the LORD: "In an acceptable time I have heard You, And in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You As a covenant to the people, To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;

We would put this at the end of the Time of Jacob's trouble. It is the "acceptable time" for the Lord to hear them cry out to Him. It is, for the Jews on earth during that time, "salvation" and miraculous "preservation."

After the Lord returns, Israel will be a "covenant." This may be the New Covenant promised Israel involving giving them a heart of flesh to replace their hard hearts of stone. The Church is experiencing blessings of the New Covenant, e.g., the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

Isa 49:9 That You may say to the prisoners, 'Go forth,' To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' "They shall feed along the roads, And their pastures shall be on all desolate heights.

Isa 49:10 They shall neither hunger nor thirst, Neither heat nor sun shall strike them; For He who has mercy on them will lead them, Even by the springs of water He will guide them.

The return of Jews to Jerusalem after the Time of Jacob' Trouble will be with great joy. The returnees will be provided with shade and supplies along the way.

Isa 49:11 I will make each of My mountains a road, And My highways shall be elevated.

Is this a future flat-earth proof-text? No. But there *will* be changes in the geography of earth. It will be easy to journey to Jerusalem.

Isa 49:12 Surely these shall come from afar; Look! Those from the north and the west, And these from the land of Sinim."

You'll be able to look far and see Jews from "Sinim" on their way. There is absolutely zero agreement on Sinim. Whether it was Phoenicia or farther, perhaps China, we don't know.

Isa 49:13 Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, And will have mercy on His afflicted.

I'm taking this literally:

- Geologists have proven that the earth **hums** due to a phenomenon known as "microseisms," which are low-frequency, long-period seismic waves that constantly reverberate through the planet's crust.
- In May of last year a solar-powered balloon mission detected a repeating infrasound noise in the stratosphere. Scientists don't know what is making it.

Isa 49:14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me."

Isa 49:15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

The Lord's supernatural love for Israel is stronger and more faithful than the greatest natural love.

Isa 49:16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

I don't see how this isn't literal. In ancient times servants and slaves *were* tattooed or branded or pierced. It makes sense that THE Servant of all would be likewise.

Maybe it's a reference to the Lord's scars from the Crucifixion? He will bear them for eternity. That's not at all what it says here. The nails were not an inscription.

The inscription is the earthly Jerusalem, the capital of the earth in the Millennium. There is one on each palm. Are they two identical tattoos? Or is one the New Jerusalem that comes from Heaven to satellite the earth? Because it seems like in the Millennium both Jerusalem's will be active. The New Jerusalem cannot be on earth replacing Jerusalem; it's too big!

Isa 49:17 Your sons shall make haste; Your destroyers and those who laid you waste Shall go away from you.

- Jews who had been dispersed by the antichrist's all-out assault will "make haste" to return to Jerusalem.
- Persecutors who took the Mark of the Beast will flee.

You might run across the suggestion that Isaiah was writing about the Jews returning to Jerusalem when released from Babylon. Only a relatively few Israelites responded to Cyrus' edict and returned to rebuild Jerusalem. The majority decided to stay in Babylon. This prediction is for the far future.

Isa 49:18 Lift up your eyes, look around and see; All these gather together and come to you. As I live," says the LORD, "You shall surely clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament, And bind them on you as a bride does.

The CEV translates this, *"I, the LORD, promise that your city with its people will be as lovely as a bride wearing her jewelry."*

Isa 49:19 "For your waste and desolate places, And the land of your destruction, Will even now be too small for the inhabitants; And those who swallowed you up will be far away.

The Millennial Kingdom on Earth will have a good problem to resolve. There will be an abundance of believing Jews.

Isa 49:20 The children you will have, After you have lost the others, Will say again in your ears, 'The place is too small for me; Give me a place where I may dwell.'

Isa 49:21 Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, Since I have lost my children and am desolate, A captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? There I was, left alone; But these, where were they?' "

Modern Israel is a miracle. How did the Jews survive as a people? The history of antisemitism is mind-boggling. Speaking of Ukraine, have you heard of Bogdan Chmielnicki? In the 1700s he and his Ukrainian Cossacks murdered Jews and burned Jewish communities. Until Hitler, Chmielnicki was the greatest murderer of Jews in all of Jewish history.

Isa 49:22 Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, And set up My standard for the peoples; They shall bring your sons in their arms, And your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders;

Isa 49:23 Kings shall be your foster fathers, And their queens your nursing mothers; They shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, And lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD, For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."

These predictions sound too good to be true. The LORD said, "Just wait; you'll see."

Let's talk eschatology for a moment. We've talked about replacement theology. It is the teaching that physical Israel has been replaced in God's plan by spiritual Israel, which includes the Gentiles. Nothing Isaiah wrote would make any sense if that were true. The plain sense of his prophecies is that the physical descendants of Abraham will endure to the end and receive all the promises made by God.

Isa 49:24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, Or the captives of the righteous be delivered?

Isa 49:25 But thus says the LORD: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, And the prey of the terrible be delivered; For I will contend with him who contends with you, And I will save your children.

We'd have to say the Lord is a battling butler.

Isa 49:26 I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, And they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh shall know That I, the LORD, am your Savior, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

This describes the warning the Lord gives people who resist His rule. Too bad we don't have time to explain "I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh." Siege warfare often resulted in cannibalism. In Second Kings, during a siege of Samaria, two Jewish mothers discuss eating one another's baby (6:24-30).

When unbelievers refuse the grace of God they bring catastrophe upon themselves.

You've probably made a connection that I have yet to mention. Are we, the Church, ever closely identified with a city?

Sure are. Revelation 21:9-10, "Then one of the seven angels... came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God."

Almost everyone gets confused by the angel saying he was going to show "the bride," then showing John the heavenly city. We should have a handle on it now, thanks to Isaiah. You see the city, you see the saints.

Jerusalem engraved on one hand... New Jerusalem on the other. That marked man is fully God, Jesus Christ, your Savior.