

EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

The man God selected to both name his Son, *Jesus*, and to be his legal guardian, was an unknown, young carpenter called *Joseph*. While history has largely ignored him, the opening chapter of Matthew details three actions that are an eternal testimony to his godly character. First (1:19), Matthew calls him “a righteous man” because he behaved according to the law—just like Zechariah and Elizabeth (Lk. 1:6). Second (1:19–20), he was a merciful man not desiring to expose Mary to public shame. Though righteous, he was not rigid, but tender. Third (1:24), he was an obedient man who did exactly as the angel commanded him. Though young in age, he was God-honoring. As you think upon the Christmas story this year, do not forget *Joseph*, and ask the Lord to help you display these rich qualities of his life.



Figure: Sea of Galilee and Plain of Gennesaret from Mount Arbel, possibly “the mountain” from which Jesus gave the Great Commission. Photo: Todd Bolen, BiblePlaces.com.

What Are You Doing This Summer?

Explore the Holy Land and excavate a biblical site with tour guide and field archaeologist, Dr. Mark Hassler, professor of Old Testament at VBTS. You can experience the thrill of witnessing the land of the Bible with your own eyes and uncovering artifacts that haven’t seen the light of day for two to three thousand years. The archaeological fieldwork takes place at the famous site of Shiloh, where Yahweh appeared to the prophet Samuel and where the tabernacle rested for three centuries. Join Dr. Hassler for the one-week tour of the Holy Land (May 15–21, 2022) followed by the four-week archaeological excavation (May 23–June 17). You can customize your length of stay to fit your schedule. The package includes room and board, educational teaching, and on-site training. Airfare excluded. The group stays in Jerusalem, and all ages are welcome. For more information contact Dr. Hassler (mhassler@vbts.edu) or visit the ABR website (DigShiloh.org).

Isaiah 49 Predicts the Servant (Jesus) and His Mother (Mary)

By Mark A. Hassler, Professor of Old Testament

On Christmas Day, we celebrate the birth of Jesus the Nazarene. Multiple Old Testament passages anticipate the unborn Messiah in his mother's womb. One such passage, Isaiah 49, predicts seven hundred years in advance that God's servant (Jesus) will be a human being, born of a woman (Mary).

- 49:1 Yahweh called me from the womb;
From the body of my mother he named me.
49:5 Now says Yahweh, who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
To bring Jacob back to him, so that Israel might be gathered to him.
49:6 "I will also make you a light of the nations
So that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

In this remarkable prophecy, Yahweh calls the Messiah from the womb, remembers his name in the loins of his mother, and forms him in the womb with a purpose—to be God's *servant* and *save* his people, Jew and Gentile alike.

Isaiah 49:3 reveals who Yahweh is speaking to: "my servant, Israel." Although several biblical excerpts identify God's servant as the nation Israel (Isa 41:8–9; 44:1–2, 21; 45:4; Luke 1:54; etc.), the servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 49 must be an individual (Jesus) for four reasons. First, the servant cannot refer to the nation because the servant will bring the nation back to God (Isa 49:5–6). Second, the first-person individualistic language in the immediate context precludes the referent from being a group. For example, the phrase "the body of my mother" fits an individual rather than a group (v. 1). And the servant's mouth resembles a "sharp sword" (v. 2), which cannot be said of the deaf, blind, and obstinate nation of Israel (cf. 65:2; Rom. 10:21).

Third, Isaiah 49 constitutes one of four so-called "Servant Songs" in the book of Isaiah (cf. chaps. 42, 49, 50, 53). Expositors commonly identify the servant as the Son of God in these related texts. The famous suffering servant passage of Isaiah 53 links innertextually with chapter 49. Compare, for instance, 49:7 ("the despised one [*bzh*] . . . the servant") with 52:13 and 53:3 ("my servant . . . he was despised [*bzh*] and forsaken of men . . . he was despised [*bzh*], and we did not esteem him").

Fourth, the New Testament apostles and prophets believed that the servant of Isaiah 49 was Jesus. This is apparent by Paul's allusion to Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 26:23 ("the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *his* resurrection from the dead he would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles"). Moreover, the apostle John evokes Isaiah 49:2 ("he has made my mouth like a sharp sword") in Revelation 19:15 ("from his mouth comes a sharp sword"). And the prophet Simeon recalls Isaiah 49:6 at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:32).

In Acts 13:47 Paul and Barnabas quote Isaiah 49:6, introducing the quote with "the Lord has commanded us [plural]." Did Paul and Barnabas take Isaiah 49:6 out of context by making themselves the referent rather than the individual servant Jesus? Not at all. By introducing the quote this way, Paul and Barnabas were not claiming to be the servant of Isaiah 49; instead, they were claiming to accept his mission as his followers, to "bring salvation to the ends of the earth." Christians can apply Isaiah 49:6 the same way Paul and Barnabas did—by being "a light for the nations" like the servant Jesus. Christmas gatherings provide us with a wonderful opportunity to share the light of Christ with unbelieving family and friends.