

READING PLAN WEEK 8 for The Epic of Eden – Isaiah
The Book of Isaiah and the Servant

Word from the Author: Springing from our past weeks' topics, the "former things" and the "latter things", we are finally hearing from Isaiah an answer to the question of who can champion the great restoration prophesied. This mysterious figure has stirred millennia of speculation – Isaiah's "Servant." He first appears in the second half of the book, and we find him doing and saying amazing, even miraculous, things. One of the great paradoxes of this book is that this Servant's perfect service would both *condemn* Israel (the failed servant) and *save* Israel. It is, ultimately, the mystery of the gospel, how the same individual first demonstrates to us *exactly* how we've failed, and yet rescue us from the consequences of that failure. We know of Isaiah's Servant primarily via four oracles that have been named "the Servant Songs": Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-11 and 52:13-53:12. This week is all about studying those songs.

Day #1: Read Isaiah 41:8-9 and 42:18-19. These and many other references identify Yahweh's first servant as Israel. Now, **Read Isaiah 42:1-9 and 49:1-13.** These are two of the Servant songs we're referencing. As you hold the attributes and focus of the Servant referenced, look at **Isaiah 1:21-23, Isaiah 5:7, and Isaiah 30:9-11.** It isn't hard to contrast the Servant referenced in the latter chapters of Isaiah with the former servant.

Day #2: Another day of comparisons: **Read Isaiah 50:4-11** and compare it with **Isaiah 1:4, 2:5-6, and 3:8.** Consider how differently the two servants of Yahweh (Israel and Isaiah's Servant) act and think. Do the same comparison by reading **Isaiah 52:13-53:12.** This fourth song is the tripping point for those, over the millennia, who try to identify Isaiah's servant as a known person (Isaiah, Moses, Hezekiah) or a group (an ideal form of Israel). Ponder this rich picture of Isaiah's Servant today. Let the Holy Spirit remind you of His unique identity.

Day #3: Read Matthew 8:14-17. What is the setting? What does Jesus do? How is Isaiah quoted? **Read Matthew 12:9-21.** What does Jesus do? How do the Pharisees respond? How does the crowd respond? How is Isaiah quoted? **Read John 12:36-43.** How do the crowds respond to Jesus? How do the leaders respond? How is Isaiah quoted? Meditate over how Isaiah's Servant was definitively recognized by the New Testament writers, yet the truth eluded the spiritual leaders of the day.

This week's reflection question: Maybe give a quick look at Matthew 23:37 before we reflect this week. Jesus here cries over his beloved city in the face of its unreasonable unbelief. How can this conflicting response to the reality of Yahweh's Servant inform our own sense of those who claim they wait for salvation or those who have abandoned the hope of it? Do Jesus' words echo still through our modern times? Ask God to give you a sense of how to react to this present conundrum. What would He have you do (Prayers? Words? Actions?) in light of the unchanging and settled truth of the identity of Jesus Christ?

[illegible]