

Isaiah 42

This is a striking chapter. At first sight it seems to contradict itself. We find its first verses speaking in most exalted terms of the servant of the Lord and then in verse 19 we find this question: "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf as my messenger that I sent?" God's truth is being progressively revealed in this chapter. Let us examine its detail.

The theme of the servant of the Lord has already been introduced in Isaiah 41:8-9. In 42:1-4 we find an enlargement on the theme. It is not here stated who the servant is, as in 41:8-9, where he was declared to be Israel. Here an ideal picture is presented of the work which the servant is intended to do. What a marvelous picture it is! This is one in whom the soul of the Lord delights. The Spirit of the Lord is upon Him. Through Him, judgment will be brought, not only to God's people but also to the Gentiles. We thus find a world-wide ministry promised to this great figure. Verses 2 to 4 describe the dignity and gentleness of His conduct. He is not one who must exert violent effort to accomplish His task. He never despairs of the outcome or tends to fall into discouragement. In accomplishing His great purpose He does not tread on those that get in His way, or cast aside those who are unable to do the work themselves. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." The accomplishment of His work is certain. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His law." His ministry is to be world-wide.

What an idea! What a wonderful picture! It has already been stated in 41:8-9 that Israel is God's servant, but how can Israel fulfill the ideal described here? How can a people struggling and suffering in bondage and misery hope to fulfill the glorious task here attributed to "the Servant of the Lord?" This question is not merely one which occurs to the modern mind; we find it clearly expressed in the latter part of the chapter. Before looking at it let us examine the verses which intervene.

Verse 5 again declares the omnipotence of God. Even the people who deny His existence receive their breath only because He chooses to give it to them. He is the One who