

Verse 3 identified the Servant with Israel, and indeed He must come from Israel, so that He can represent Israel in doing the work for which Israel has responsibility. As we have noticed, later verses show that He is to do a work for Israel as well as for the nations, thereby indicating that He is an individual who can be distinguished from the Israelite nation.

At the end of verse 3 the LORD declares that His glorious purposes will be established through the work of His Servant. This reminds us of John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Thus far the tone of absolute confidence and certainty of accomplishing the work is identical with that in 42:1-7. Verse 4 seems to strike a discordant note: "But I said, I have toiled in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and uselessly; yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God." It may seem hard to think of such words being said by one whose absolute confidence and unwavering forward progress could be described as it was in 42:1-7.

In view of the earlier passages in which we have seen the inability of Israel to perform the work described, we must consider the possibility that in verse 4 the nation as a whole is speaking, thinking of its responsibility and feeling its inadequacy. However, a little reflection shows that this interpretation is not correct. The reason for Israel's inability to perform the work is not that it has toiled in vain, but that its sin and unfaithfulness have resulted in spiritual blindness and have made it necessary that God send it into exile.

Obviously, then, some other interpretation must be found. It must point, instead, to a time of discouragement in the course of the work of the Servant. The New Testament shows that there was indeed such a period during our Lord's earthly ministry. The crowds began to thin out, and the faithful disciples seemed unable to grasp the true intent of His messages. The time came when He even said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). Chapter 42 and most of chapter 49 emphasize His exaltation and the success of His work. This verse