

Sometimes there is an attempt to explain this verse as referring to Israel rather than to the servant. Such an interpretation, however, is not completely satisfactory, for it does not meet the requirements of this and the following verses. As in the similar expressions in Isaiah 42:6-7, the ideal picture presented is beyond the capacity of the nation to fulfill. Israel has indeed been humiliated, but the cause of the humiliation has been its own sin, and therefore it can never lead to the exalted accomplishment of these verses.

Verses 8-9 repeat the teaching of Isaiah 42:6-7 about the work of the ideal servant.

Verse 10 shows the wonderful blessings of those who follow the servant of God, as He leads them by the springs of waters. In verse 11 we are told how He makes a way for them through the mountains and exalts the highways on which they must travel. This brings to a focus the wonderful statements of the prelude to our symphony in Isaiah 40:3-4. In verse 12 the remarkable extent of the work of the servant is clearly indicated with people coming to his light from the north and from the west and even from the land of Sinim (China). What a marvelous prediction of the extension of the gospel of deliverance from sin through the servant of the Lord to the very ends of the world! How wonderfully it has been fulfilled in these days when groups of believers have come to the Savior from so many sections of the earth, even including this very land of China, which must have seemed in the days of Isaiah to be the utmost fringe of civilization. Truly He has become "a light to the Gentiles."

Verse 13 concludes this section with an exhortation to the heavens and the earth to break forth into joy because of the wonderful salvation which the Lord brings to His people.

Thus we have seen that the first part of Isaiah 49 contains a wonderful declaration by "the Servant of the Lord" of the work to which God has called Him. He recounts the promise that the Lord will sustain Him in the performance of this work and will cause its results to extend to the very ends of the earth. It is no wonder that in verse 13 the prophet utters an exclamation of great joy over God's mercy.

In marked contrast to this we now find in verse 14 that Zion makes a despairing complaint. She finds it impossible to recognize the wonders of the promises which have been given.