

The Role of Prophetic Singers in God's Plan to Redeem the Nations - Isaiah 42

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Isaiah 42:1-17 is a profound prophecy of God's plan to redeem and save the nations. The prophecy is given in three key parts:
1. Part 1 - God's announcement of His solution to the crisis in the nations.
 2. Part 2 - The response of the nations to God's announcement.
 3. Part 3 - God's release of justice to the nations.
- B. It is a rich prophecy. It begins with a prophecy about Jesus' coming that includes details about His first coming. It then gives instructions to the nations to respond to Jesus by filling the earth with singing. Finally it concludes with the prediction of Jesus' return to judge and deliver the nations. The first and third part of the prophecy declare what God will do while the second part instructs us on what we are called to do.
1. Isaiah puts a lot of information in this prophecy and predicts the unusual role of singers in God's purposes in the nations. Isaiah's prophecy focuses on singers, and it is important to recognize that the Bible emphasizes both prayer and singing at the end of the age.
 2. When John gets a glimpse into heaven in the book of Revelation, he sees intercession and singing joined together. We could say prayer and worship joined together.
 3. Before the throne there are elders and saints with both harps (music) and bowls that contain incense. In other words, they offer worship and prayer together. Throughout the book we see the role of prayer in the book as well as explosions of singing (Revelation 5:8-10; 8:1-5; 15:2-4).
 4. The best way to understand these prophecies is that prayer and worship will come together in a single expression at the end of the age. In our own generation we are already seeing prayer and worship come together and flow seamlessly so it is easy to image these prophecies being fulfilled together.

- C. Understanding each part of Isaiah's prophecy gives us a clear picture of what God is communicating to us through Isaiah's prophecy. That is important because, as we will see, Isaiah gives us an instruction to participate in the prophecy.
1. Some prophecies in the Bible are simply predictions of what God will do.
 2. Other prophecies are instructions that both tell us what will happen, but also instruct us to respond to the prophecy. Isaiah 42 is one of those prophecies.
 3. Part of walking in obedience to the Word is understanding what is predicted in the Word and then laboring for the church to be what the Word predicts the church must become.
- D. Isaiah's prophecy also has geographic elements to it. Isaiah gives specific instructions to coastlands, islands, and the ends of the earth. These are not simply figurative statements; they are instructions to the nations. Therefore, if we want to labor in the nations we must understand what the Scripture says must come to pass in the nations and labor towards that end.

II. PART 1 - GOD'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS SOLUTION TO CRISIS IN THE NATIONS

- A. The first part of Isaiah's prophecy is God's announcement of His solution to the crisis in the nations. This crisis began in Genesis 11 when the nations were formed as a judgment from God on man's rebellion. Divided and rebellious nations create a hopeless situation where it seems like God will never get what He wants - an intimate relationship with human beings who are in agreement and partnership with Him. However, God does have a solution to the crisis in the nations. That solution is His Servant:

¹Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. (Isaiah 42:1 ESV)

1. God's pleasure is in His servant.
2. The Spirit is upon His Servant.
3. His Servant will bring forth justice to the nations. Note it is not just one nation the Lord wants to save. He wants to save all the nations just as Isaiah 49 prophesies.

⁶he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a

*light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”
(Isaiah 49:6 ESV)*

4. Justice is key because it is the foundation of God’s throne.

*⁷But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice,
(Psalm 9:7 ESV)*

*¹⁴Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love
and faithfulness go before you. (Psalm 89:14 ESV)*

*²Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are
the foundation of his throne. (Psalm 97:2 ESV)*

- a. Justice and righteousness (God’s commitment to His promises) are the foundation of His throne because justice is the result of the rule of God.
- b. Injustice is in the earth because we have refused the rule of God. Justice comes when the rule of God comes. Therefore, this Servant is given the task of bringing justice - the rule of God - to the nations.
- c. God’s throne is also set on righteousness because one key aspect of righteousness is faithfulness to your commitments. God is faithful to do all that He said He will do.

- B. God has chosen a Servant who will be God’s solution to the crisis in the nations. Our ultimate hope is in this Servant and nothing else. All other solutions will ultimately fall short.

- C. This announcement also contains intricate descriptions of Jesus first coming

²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. (Isaiah 42:2-3 ESV)

1. The prophecy describes a deliverer who is unlike any other human deliver. He is meek and lowly. He is kind and gentle with the weak.
2. This prophecy declares the character of Jesus, which was so powerfully demonstrated in His first coming. In many ways Isaiah 42:1-9 highlights Jesus’ character in His first coming.

3. Isaiah repeats the promise that the servant will bring forth justice, but this time he adds the word "faithfully." The essence of this word is certainty meaning it is certain the justice will come. This is important because the verse describes Jesus' first coming. If all we have is His first coming then we could ask the question, "Will He really bring justice to the earth?" This is why Isaiah adds the word faithfully. Though it will appear justice is delayed He will *faithfully* bring forth justice. It is certain.
 4. Isaiah 42:1-9 is a glimpse at Jesus that emphasizes His first coming while also pointing to His second coming. In comparison, Isaiah 42:13-17 is a focus on Jesus' second coming. Both must be for a complete picture of God's chosen Servant.
- D. God's Servant will not be discouraged and will not give up until He has redeemed the earth. This is intended to give us courage.
- ⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Isaiah 42:4 ESV)***
1. God anticipates the fact that we will easily become discouraged when we see the challenges in our nations and that is why He tells us that His Servant will not be discouraged. This prophecy describes Jesus' posture during the last 2,000 years of waiting to see the nations come under His leadership.
 2. As an example, the most discouraging thing that can happen to an army is for the army's leaders to become discouraged and lose hope. When that happens an army is immediately defeated. That's why an army must know that their leader is not discouraged and has not given up hope. A leader with great courage and hope releases courage and strength to an army even when they are under pressure.
 3. Because Jesus is our leader and God's plan unfolds over a long period of time, we must know that Jesus is neither discouraged nor weak. The condition of the earth is not a sign of Jesus' inability to bring justice, but rather His longsuffering and His mercy.
 4. God put this prediction here so that we will have courage in our hearts. Regardless of what we may see around us, He is not discouraged and His Son is not discouraged.

- E. Not only is the Servant not discouraged, the Servant will labor until He releases justice in the entire earth. This is powerful because it predicts that the Servant will establish justice in all the nations. The Servant is going to save more than Israel - He is going to save the nations.

⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Isaiah 42:4 ESV)

1. Isaiah 49 makes the same prediction:

⁶he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6 ESV)

2. Notice Isaiah chooses to specifically highlight the coastlands. This word can also be translated the islands. This has a profound application for many regions including Asia.

3. Jesus will not grow weary or become discouraged. He will labor until the coastlands and the islands eagerly wait for His law and His Word. Jesus will not just subdue the coastlands, He will labor until they desire and love His word. When you compare several translations you begin to get the sense of what Isaiah is prophesying:

⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Isaiah 42:4 ESV)

⁴He will not grow dim or be crushed before establishing justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait in anticipation for his decrees." (Isaiah 42:4 NET)

⁴"He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law." (Isaiah 42:4 NASB95)

⁴he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope." (Isaiah 42:4 NIV)

⁴He will not falter or lose heart until justice prevails throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction." (Isaiah 42:4 NLT)

- a. There will be eagerness, desire, and anticipation in the nations for the words of Jesus.
 - b. This is a profound prophetic promise for all those who dwell in the coastlands, islands, and the farthest parts of the earth.
 - c. Jesus will not rest until these nations love His Word and eagerly listen to hear His voice. Another way to say this is He will not rest until there is agreement with Him in these nations.
4. In Matthew 23:39 Jesus predicted that He would not return to Jerusalem until He was welcomed again.
- ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 23:39 ESV)*
- a. In Isaiah 42, Isaiah predicts there must be a people in the nations who welcome His law.
 - b. When we put these two passages together we see that there must be a people in agreement with Jesus both in Israel and the nations.
- F. Verse 6 is a summary of God's solution to the crisis of the nations.
- ⁶"I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, (Isaiah 42:6 ESV)*
- 1. God reiterates His name as a statement of His power to bring forth His Servant.
 - 2. God has called His Servant in righteousness. Righteousness in this context is a reference to God's covenant faithfulness. God is bringing forth the Servant as part of His commitment to His own promises.
 - 3. God Himself will lead the Servant and keep Him. The Servant cannot fail because God will sovereignly preserve him.
 - 4. The Servant will be a covenant for the people. Because He will never fail, the Servant will be God's covenant for the people. The Servant supersedes all covenants made to this point and becomes the mediator between God and man. In the past it was a code or law that mediated between God and man, but Isaiah predicts that the Servant will become the one who mediates. The book of Hebrews expounds on this prediction:

⁶*But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. (Hebrews 8:6 ESV)*

¹⁵*Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:15 ESV)*

²⁴*and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:24 ESV)*

5. Not only will the Servant become a covenant for the people, He will also become a light to the nations (See also Isaiah 49:8). Throughout this passage God keeps emphasizing the global dimension of His plan of redemption.
- G. Verses 1-9 go into much more detail about the nature of the Servant, but looking at just a few verses enables us to see what is in God's heart and mind regarding the Servant. We begin to see the character of the Servant. We now know that this Servant is Jesus. He has come and He has appeared, but if you look closely through the predictions Isaiah gives us, Jesus has not yet fulfilled everything in these verses. His first coming has certainly set this in motion, but He has not yet brought His justice to the nations and done all that the Father has called Him to do. There are things that must be fulfilled in His second coming.
- H. Before Jesus will fulfill all that He is called to do, something else must happen. The nations must respond to God's announcement and verses 10-12 tell us how the nations are to respond to that announcement.

III. PART 2 - THE RESPONSE OF THE NATION'S TO GOD'S ANNOUNCEMENT

- A. In Isaiah 42:1-9, God declares His solution to the crisis in the nations. He will send a glorious individual referred to as His Servant. That Servant will not only save Israel, He will save the nations as well. He will be so glorious that even the ends of the earth love Him and long for His word.
- B. In Isaiah 42:10, there is a key transition in the prophecy. In verse 10, Isaiah shifts from predicting what God will do to instructing the nations on how to respond to what God is going to do. That is an important part of the passage for us, because it is an instruction given to the church. It tells us how to respond to the declaration of God's Servant.

¹⁰Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. ¹¹Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the habitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains. ¹²Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise in the coastlands. (Isaiah 42:10-12 ESV)

C. Isaiah's prophecy is no longer get a prediction. It now becomes an instruction.

¹⁰Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. (Isaiah 42:10 ESV)

1. Prophecies like this are invitations. They invite us to fulfill them by giving us predictions in the form of instructions. In verses 1-9, God gave sovereign predictions of what He will do. No one else can bring forth the Servant and empower the Servant to do what he is called to do. God alone can bring forth and empower His Servant.
2. Verse 10 tells us the role we have to play in this divine plan. We are called to respond to what God is going to do through His Servant. This is an invitation to join God in His plan. It is a point of partnership. The prophecy of verses 1-9 is intended to touch our hearts so that we desire partnership with God in His glorious plan to bring forth His Servant.
3. By the time we get to verse 9, we should be asking, "God, how do we partner with you in your plan to bring justice through Your Servant? Verses 10-12 are intended to answer that question. Verses 10-12 contain a prophecy but they contain it in the form of an instruction so that we will recognize that this is our part to play in bringing the prophecy to pass.

D. To understand our response correctly we have to recognize that there is more to the prophecy of Isaiah 42 than Jesus' first coming. The first coming set the fulfillment of the prophecy in motion, but the prophecy is dominated by the theme of justice filling the earth. Justice filling the earth includes the judgment of wicked and bringing things under the rule of God.

1. This is something that Jesus will do at His second coming and Isaiah will highlight that part of the plan in the next part of the prophecy. In kindness, He has chosen to offer mercy to the nations before executing justice in the earth.

2. The first coming should cause us to long even more for the second coming. Having had a glimpse of the beauty and majesty of Jesus in His ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection, our hearts should desire His second coming even more.
 3. The beauty of Jesus in His first coming should cause prophecies like this to burn within our hearts.
 4. The glimpse we have of Jesus in His first coming should provoke us to look for ways we can labor with the Lord in the earth to prepare the way for His Son to return and fulfill everything that has been spoken over Him.
 5. The first coming is intended to stir our deepest desires and to align our own internal cry for justice and deliverance with God's intended method of bringing that deliverance.
- E. God commands singing as the response to His announcement of His Servant and what His Servant will do. God wants the earth filled with prophetic songs that declare the beauty and majesty of Jesus in the earth. Because God gave us an instruction, we want to understand as much as we can about that command:
- ¹⁰Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. ¹¹Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the habitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains. ¹²Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise in the coastlands. (Isaiah 42:10-12 ESV)*
- F. The fact that God is instructing us to establish new songs in the earth tells us that He wants us to intentionally fill the earth with songs. There is an extent to which singing is a normal part of life. However, we are instructed to intentionally fill the earth with singing. This is more than "normal" singing. Normal singing does not require prophetic instruction.
1. This is something unusual, something that will be a sign and a wonder in the nations.
 2. The fact that the Lord instructs us that singing should be the first response to the announcement of His Son tells us how important it is to Him.
 3. We tend to think that teaching or preaching about His Son's return should be the primary mode of communication - and that is an important part - but the Lord also specifically chooses to highlight singing.

- G. We should understand this instruction as an expansion of the ministry of singing in the temple in Jerusalem. At the time Isaiah prophesied, there was already a regimen of night and day singing that had been put in place by King David (1 Chronicles 15:16, 27; 2 Chronicles 35:15; Nehemiah 12:45-46). Isaiah's prophecy has a clear message: night and day singing in Jerusalem is not enough. It has to fill the nations. It has to go beyond what David set in place.
- H. Verse 10 tells us the content of these songs. The Lord wants us to sing a "new song" in the earth.
1. The phrase "new song" is used several times in the Scripture (Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10; Revelation 5:9; 14:3). Each time that phrase is used it is connected with God's end-time deliverance. The song is a response to God releasing His judgments in the earth and redeeming His people.
 2. The "new song" is a song about the return of Jesus. It is a song that anticipates all that He will do in the nations when He comes. We have to understand that God wants the nations singing about the return of Jesus before that return. He wants the nations singing about His deliverance and signing about His judgments.
 3. This "new song" is a response to the announcement of the coming of the servant to bring justice in the earth that comes before the second coming (Isaiah 42:13-17). That alone also tells us that this is primarily referring to songs about the return of Jesus. We are called to respond to Jesus' coming with singing. Sadly right now most of the church hardly responds to His second coming at all. However, that will change.
 4. The location of this instruction in the passage also tells us that these are songs of the Lord's return. The command to sing is the response to the prophecy of God's Servant coming to release justice and it precedes those judgments being released in the earth (vs. 13-15).
 5. When you read the New Testament you can feel the urgency in the apostles for the return of the Lord. They want Him to come. They expect Him to come. The Lord is going to fill the church with that same anticipation again.
 - a. When our hearts are not longing for the return of Jesus it means we have not yet seen Him as He truly is. The apostles missed Jesus because they had been with Him.

- b. The closer we get to Jesus the more we will miss Him and the more we will long to fill the earth with songs of His return. Studying the person of Jesus and His first coming is one way to stir our hearts to labor for these songs in the earth.
6. Verse 10 tells us that God has chosen singing to be the global response to the beauty of Jesus. When the nations are filled with anticipation of the return of the Lord they are going to break out into singing.
 7. The fact that God wants songs of Jesus' second coming means we need to understand it and need to have our hearts connected to it. He has chosen to prepare the earth for the return of His Son by filling the earth with songs.
 8. We naturally sing what we know and what we love and the lack of singing about the return of Jesus indicates we have not given time to this subject in the Word and that our emotions are not connected to the Father's emotions on this subject.
- I. Isaiah also tells us the location of these songs:
- ¹⁰Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. ¹¹Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the habitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains. ¹²Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise in the coastlands. (Isaiah 42:10-12 ESV)***
1. God wants this new song sung from the very ends of the earth. It is not enough for these songs to fill Jerusalem or some other location on the earth. Songs of the Lord's return must fill the entire earth.
 2. Because night and day singing was set in place in the temple during Isaiah's day, his audience could have interpreted this to mean the singing at the temple, but Isaiah makes it clear that night and day singing must expand from the temple and fill every part of the earth.
 3. The phrase "you who go down to the sea" can also be translated as those who sail the sea or as the roar of the sea. Regardless of the translation of the phrase, the meaning is clear - God wants these songs carried across the nations. The phrases used in these verses have profound applications for the nations, but specifically for "the ends of the earth" - the region of East Asia.

4. The islands must sing. The coastlands must sing. The deserts must sing. *The very ends of the earth must sing.*
- J. Isaiah 42:10-12 contains a powerful prediction in the form of a command. All of the different factors in this prophecy are why prophecies like this are invitations. This must be fulfilled, but it will be fulfilled when the people of God recognize their part to play in the prophecy, respond to the instructions and begin to fill the earth with singing.

IV. PART 3 - GOD RELEASES JUSTICE TO THE NATIONS

- A. Isaiah's prophecy shifts again in verse 13 to describe God's response to the global singing of verses 10-12:
- ¹³The LORD goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes. ¹⁴For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant. ¹⁵I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools. ¹⁶And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. ¹⁷They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, "You are our gods." (Isaiah 42:13-17 ESV)*
1. After the nations are filled with singing, God's Servant will come in power and delivers the nations. The beginning of the chapter described the nature and character of Jesus, and this part of the prophecy tells us the rest of the story. It connects the first coming of Jesus with the second coming.
 2. God's Servant is gentle and merciful, but a day will come when He will release His power. He will patiently wait for a long time so that the maximum number of people may hear the offer for mercy, but a day will come when He suddenly delivers the nations.
 3. Notice in verses 1-9 it was the Servant bringing justice on the earth but in verses 13-17 it is the Lord Himself who brings judgment. If we recognize it, Isaiah is telling us that the Lord is the Servant. He is prophesying Jesus' unique identity as both God and man.
- B. The fact that singing in the nations precedes the coming of the Lord in judgment gives us even more insight into the nature of the songs in the earth.

1. When we looked briefly at the content of these songs, we saw that they were songs of the return of the Lord, both based on their context in the prophecy and on the command to sing a “new song” which is a song sung in anticipation of the Lord coming in power and judgment in the earth (Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10; Revelation 5:9; 14:3).
2. This means that these songs are meant to be a prophetic proclamation in the earth. God will release anointed preaching regarding the return of the Lord, but He wants to fill the earth with prophetic singing about His Son and all that His Son will do. He wants the earth to hear about the return of His Son from songs. These songs will stir the hearts of the nations and cause many to turn to the Lord. They will likely play a significant role in the great harvest that occurs near the end of the age (Revelation 7:9-14).
3. These singers will play another key role in God’s redemptive plan: preparing the nations for the return of the Lord.
 - a. Verses 13-17 vividly declare the Lord’s judgment on the nations. This judgment is a key part of releasing His justice (vs. 1-9). Releasing justice requires judgments to be released and evil to be addressed. Though the subject of the Lord’s judgment is often avoided it is central to the issue of justice. Whenever justice comes, it means a judgment has been made on wickedness.
 - b. Throughout redemptive history we see that God always releases a witness in the earth before He releases His judgments. Before the flood, he sent Noah to preach. Before the Exodus, He sent Moses to warn Pharaoh. Before He judged Israel and Judah, He sent prophets. Before Jesus came He sent John the Baptist. There is a clear Biblical pattern. Amos 3 summarizes this pattern by revealing that the Lord always speaks to His servants before His judgments so that they can prepare the people:

“Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it? ⁷“For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. ⁸The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:6-8 ESV)

- c. Isaiah makes it clear that the Lord's judgments wait until this singing fills this earth. The Lord "restrains" Himself and holds His peace until this signing fills the nations. The very fact that God releases His judgments in the earth after the nations sing tells us that this singing in the nations will be part of God's preparation for the nations. This is why God wants loud shouts across the nations. He wants all the earth to hear of His glory and majesty before the day of judgment. He wants to offer the earth an opportunity to turn.
- C. We know from the New Testament that Jesus is the one who will execute the judgment of God (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31). This means these judgments are the judgments of Jesus.
1. To have a complete picture of the character of Jesus we have to look at Him through the lens of Isaiah 42:1-9 and Isaiah 42:13-17.
 2. In verses 1-9 we saw Jesus' essential character. He does not raise His voice. He is gentle with the weak. He is patient and not discouraged.
²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Isaiah 42:2-4 ESV)
 3. This is the character of Jesus. He is truly meek and gentle. He is truly patient. What we have to recognize is that these character traits are what actually set the context for His judgments in Isaiah 42:13-17. He is patient and releases His judgments only when the earth does not respond to His meekness and gentleness.
 4. In verse 14 He reminds us that He has held His peace and been quiet for a long time. His character is demonstrated in His restraint. This is a statement referring in part to verse 2. Jesus has been kind and gentle for a long time, but wickedness in the earth demands He release His judgments. Even then, He waits for singers to emerge throughout the earth to warn the earth of His judgments.
- D. In Matthew 24, Jesus tells us that the end of the age, and His judgments, will not come on the earth until a witness of the gospel has been preached to every tribe and tongue.

¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14 ESV)

1. It is important to see the correlation between Isaiah 42 and Matthew 24:14. Isaiah tells us that God will hold back His judgments until singing fills the earth. The gospels tell us that Jesus is the one who will execute those judgments and Jesus predicts that His judgments and the end of the age will not come until a witness is given to all the nations.
 2. When we look at these two passages together it becomes clear that the singing of Isaiah 42 is part of the witness of Matthew 24:14. Matthew 24:14 predicts a witness of the "gospel of the kingdom" part of which is the witness of Jesus coming as King to bring His judgments so that justice will fill the earth.
 3. However, that will not happen until these singers begin to sing. Putting these singers in place is part of finishing the task of the Great Commission, because Jesus will not come - He will "stay silent" - until these singers take their place in the earth. Therefore these singers are a critical part of world evangelism and finishing the task of world missions.
- E. These singers will not only prepare the nations for God's judgment, they will be a profound part of God's victory over Satan. Man's fall began when man choose to reject God's leadership, but a day is coming when singers in the nations will declare the beauty of God's leadership and ask Him to come.
- F. These singers will be a gift from the Father to His Son. When Jesus returns there will be singing throughout the nations declaring His beauty and inviting Him to come. When He came the first time no one was singing, but when He comes the second time there will be desire and expectation for His return.
- G. This third part of the prophecy is powerful because it makes it clear that the first coming alone was not enough to fulfill the prophecy. There must be a day when God breaks in with apocalyptic power.
1. The language is dramatic and climatic. God will answer the cry of the nations. He will come and make everything right.
 2. If we didn't have this prophecy we would be left to wonder if the first coming was the fulfillment of Isaiah 42, but this makes it clear there is far more to come. In the first coming, God's Servant will be meek and lowly (vs. 2) but in His second coming He will cry out in His zeal to restore creation.

¹⁴For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant. (Isaiah 42:14 ESV)

3. While God has moved dramatically throughout human history, nothing can compare with what is coming. It is far more dramatic than we can imagine. God compares everything that He has done up to this point as “silence.”

V. SINGERS PREPARING THE NATIONS FOR THE LORD’S RETURN

- A. Isaiah’s prophecy in chapter 42 is a powerful prophecy that covers the first coming of Jesus, the second coming of Jesus, and the singing in the nations that must follow the first coming and precede the second coming.
- B. As believers that love the Word of God we are called to read the Scripture, understand what season of redemptive history we are in, and labor with understanding. We are in the season after the first coming, but before the second coming. We are in the time when God wants singing to fill the nations. The singing described by Isaiah has not yet filled the nations, but it will before Jesus returns therefore this singing must be a priority in world missions.
- C. We can summarize Isaiah’s prophecy this way:
 1. God has chosen to redeem creation through His Servant. God has announced His Servant both through prophetic oracles and by revealing Him in the first coming.
 2. The nations are called to sing about the Servant before He brings justice to the earth. Isaiah instructs us to engage in this singing by giving this part of the prophecy as a command. This is our call to respond to the prophecy.
 3. When these singers take their place and prepare the nations for the return of Jesus, God will send His Servant to release justice in the nations.
- D. Prophetic passages in the Scripture are more than predictions. They are also invitations to partner with God for the fulfillment of the prophecies. We are called to read the Bible with understanding, recognize how God is inviting us to partner with Him and then actively respond to the instructions of the Bible. Most of the body of Jesus has responded this way to certain passages such as the Great Commission, but we must respond to all the instructions in Scripture. We need to read the whole Scripture, especially the prophets, looking to apply these verses to the mission of the church.

- E. These prophetic singers are also connected to the salvation of Israel.
1. In the next section of Isaiah's prophecy, Isaiah 42:18-25, God describes the tragedy of Israel. Israel began as God's nation - a people called to belong exclusively to God. However, Israel's story quickly became tragic because Israel demonstrates the crisis in the nations. Humanity does not want to serve and obey God.
 2. After describing Israel's crisis in the final few verses of Isaiah 42, God launches into a prophetic promise in Isaiah 43 of His commitment to save and restore Israel.
¹But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. (Isaiah 43:1-2 ESV)
 3. In Romans 10 and 11, Paul describes God's mysterious plan to bring the gentiles to salvation and in so doing save Israel. Romans 11:25-26 summarizes this plan:
²⁵Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; (Romans 11:25-26 ESV)
 4. What is key is to see that Isaiah 42 is also predicting this plan. Isaiah 42:10-12 calls forth singers in the nations. Isaiah's audience would have expected singers in Israel and then the nations, but the prophet calls for the nations to sing. Though Isaiah would not have understood it at the time, we can see that Isaiah is summarizing the redemptive plan of God that Paul highlights.
 5. The nations will sing and God will release His judgments. When the nations engage in Israel's inheritance and fill the earth with songs to the God of Israel the ultimate result will be a provocation of Israel to return to her place and the Lord will simultaneously deliver Israel.

- F. There is much more that could be said about these prophetic singers, but what we must recognize is filling the nations with singing about the glory of the Lord and the coming of His Servant should be a missional priority. It is more than a prediction, it is part of the mission of the church.

VI. WHY SINGING?

- A. Why does God choose to use singing in such a profound way? The passage does not give us a specific reason why God wants singing in the nations, but there are a few things that are readily apparent.
1. The first is that singing quickly moves our emotions in a way that simply speaking rarely does. The melodies that accompany singing can profoundly move our hearts and emotions. God wants our emotions connected to His plan to redeem the nations. It is not enough to simply understand His plan; we need our hearts deeply connected to that plan. We want to feel what the Father feels about His Servant liberating the earth. When we feel that, we will labor with the Father until it comes to pass.
 2. Singing allows truth to bypass much of our natural resistance and go immediately to our hearts. This is why singing and songs are such powerful tools for good and evil. We easily find ourselves singing songs and repeating lyrics even when we do not agree with them because of the power of music. It is the reason that the Scottish Politician Andrew Fletcher once said, "Let me write the songs of a nation, and I don't care who writes its laws."
 3. Singing is a corporate experience. When we declare the glory of God in song the entire congregation naturally begins to join in. Everyone has a part to play and therefore everyone is far more engaged. Whether it is a corporate church service or even a rock concert, declaring something through song results in the entire group of people declaring that truth together. There is a sense of unity and corporate identity that comes when we sing.
 - a. When a preacher declares the Word of God, most of the people listen while one declares the truth. Singing on the other hand involves the entire corporate body.
 - b. This does not mean we should neglect the preaching of the Word - preaching is one of the means God has given the congregation to hear the instruction of God.

- c. The teaching of the Word should connect our hearts to the plan of God and the result should be powerful singing in our churches and homes that strengthens our ownership and commitment to the Word of God.
 - d. This was part of the power of the Methodist movement. There were preachers like John and Charles Wesley, but Charles gave himself to writing songs and those songs played a key role in establishing the movement.
4. Songs mark great redemptive moments in history and moments throughout our lives. We can remember songs at various points in our lives. The "Song of Moses" was associated with the Exodus. In the age to come we will remember the songs sung at key moments in redemptive history. There will be specific songs associated with the return of the Lord.
 5. Songs can help stir the spirit of prophecy. Elisha called for a musician and the Spirit of the Lord came on him.

¹⁵But now bring me a musician." And when the musician played, the hand of the LORD came upon him. (2 Kings 3:15 ESV)
 6. Songs stay with us throughout our lives. We rarely repeat the phrases we have heard someone speak, but we constantly repeat phrases of truth that we have sung. It is much easier for us to memorize things we have sung than things we have spoken or heard. When those songs come to mind, they carry emotions with them, which makes them even more powerful.
 7. God wants to fill the earth with songs because He loves songs. It is part of His nature. Throughout the book of Revelation we see the culmination of the plan of redemption from heaven's perspective and throughout the book singing and music is emphasized.
 - a. God surrounds Himself with songs in Revelation 4-5.
 - b. The elders and martyrs in heaven stand before the throne with harps in their hands (Revelation 5:8; 15:2).
 - c. Through the book songs erupt as a response to who God is and to His activity (Revelation 5:9-10, 12-13; 7:9-12; 15:3; 19:1-5).

d. The Lord surrounds Himself with music because He enjoys it. He is musical and that is why we are musical. Our affinity for songs and music is connected to being made in His image. There is a deep connection between God's love for music and our own natural desire for music.

B. Jesus taught us to pray that the earth would become like heaven:

⁹Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10 ESV)

1. This prayer gives us tremendous insight into why God wants songs released in the earth before Jesus comes.
2. God surrounds Himself with songs in heaven because He enjoys them. Jesus' first prayer request for us is that we would pray that the earth would become like heaven.
3. Part of why the Father instructs us to fill the earth with songs is because that is what Jesus enjoys. It is part of preparing the earth for Jesus' rule. It makes the earth resemble heaven.
4. The first time Jesus came there was complete silence on the earth. No one recognized what was happening. It was so silent that angels burst onto the scene just outside Bethlehem and declared to the shepherds what was happening.
5. The angels had to announce the first coming of Jesus because humans were not doing what we are called to do. We had not yet taken our place. However, the second coming will be very different. We will take our place. The earth will be filled with the songs of men declaring the return of the Lord and causing the earth to begin to feel like heaven.