

THE SAVIOUR'S NINEFOLD MISSION TO THE UNBELIEVERS OF THE WORLD: REACHING EVERYONE FOR GOD

ISAIAH 49:01–13

Introduction

God loves the world. He loves every single person in the world, including murderers, abusers, oppressors, liars, thieves, wife-beaters, naggers, complainers, agnostics and atheists. Even when people curse, reject and defy Him, God loves them. No matter how people treat God, He still loves them. He wants to save all people from the terrifying judgment that is coming against all their ungodliness and unrighteousness. Because of His love for the world, God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver the human race from the coming judgment.

This present Scripture proclaims the Saviour's mission to the world. God sent Christ into the world to save and help people: the unbelievers; the discouraged who feel deserted, alienated, forsaken, forgotten; and the weary and heavily burdened; and the whole human race. This is, *The Saviour's Mission to the World: Being Eternally Called to Reach the World for God*, Isaiah 49:1-50:11.

- I. The Saviour's ninefold mission to the unbelievers of the world: reaching everyone for God (vv. 49:1-13).
- II. The Saviour's threefold mission to the discouraged: reaching all who feel forsaken, forgotten (vv. 49:14-50:3).
- III. The Saviour's twofold mission to the weary: reaching out to all who are in bondage to sin and death (vv. 50:4-9).
- IV. The Saviour's specific mission to the whole human race: to warn each person to fear the LORD and obey the Saviour (vv. 50:10-11).

Isaiah 49:01–13 The Saviour's Ninefold Mission to the Unbelievers of the World: Reaching Everyone for God

The Saviour was given a very special, ninefold mission when He came into the world. Note that the Saviour Himself is speaking, inviting all the people from the islands and distant nations to give close attention. What He has to say is of utmost importance. He has a very special message, good tidings of great joy for the world.

1. The Saviour was called to do God's will. In fact, God appointed Him for His mission before He was born. He even called Him by Name before His birth. These two facts suggest that the Saviour has existed eternally and that a very personal relationship existed between Him and God before His birth. From the beginning, before Creation itself, the Saviour was called to be God's very special messenger to the world. Before He was born, an angel appeared and announced that He was to be called Jesus, "for
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He shall save His people from their sins" (Mat 1:21). Later as an adult, Jesus Christ proclaimed: "Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God" (Heb 10:7).

John 10:10 *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

2. The Saviour was called to proclaim the Word of God (v. 2). His mouth was to be like a sharp sword that would divide a person's soul or fleshly desires from his spirit and righteous behaviour (Heb 4:12). While He walked upon the earth, the Saviour was to use "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph 6:17). His Word would go forth like an arrow, wounding consciences and convicting people of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). The Saviour's Word would be like a fire that melts people's hearts before God and like a hammer that breaks their rock-hard hearts, crushing them into soft powder before God. Note this significant fact: while the Saviour proclaimed the Word of God, God protected Him in the shadow of His hand.

Luke 4:22 *All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.*

Luke 4:32 *They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.*

John 6:63 *"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."*

John 6:68 *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

John 7:46 *"No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.*

John 12:48 *"There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day."*

John 14:24 *"He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."*

3. The Saviour was called to be God's Servant, the new *Israel* on earth. The work that Israel as a nation had failed to do, the Saviour would do. Remember that God had chosen the Israelites for three primary purposes:
 - => To be the people who would bear strong testimony that He alone is the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh), the only living and true God.
 - => To be the people through whom He would send His Word, the Holy Word of God, to the world.
 - => To be the people through whom He would send the Messiah, the Saviour, to the world.

But the Israelites failed in their God-given task. They failed to be God's witnesses to the unbelievers of the world. They failed to keep God's holy commandments. They chose to live immoral and unrighteous lives, striving to acquire the power, riches and pleasures of this world. And most tragic, when God sent Christ into the world,

they rejected Him (John 1:11). Despite Israel's failure, God still loved the world and was determined to save the world (John 3:16). Therefore, He appointed His Son to be the new Israel, to be His very special witness of God's love and salvation. God also appointed Christ to be the Saviour of the world and to proclaim His Holy Word to the ends of the earth. The Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, fulfilled every purpose for which God had appointed the old Israel. Christ Himself became God's servant, the new Israel.

Thought 1. Believers often seek the power, riches and pleasures of this world; consequently, they fail to carry out the mission for which God has called them. Christ came to be God's Servant, and He was faithful in His calling. As the Servant of God, He ministered to the people of the world, fulfilling His mission. God has given us the mission of being His witnesses to a lost and dying world, a world that reels in desperate need. Yet far too many of us became wrapped up in the pleasures and possessions of this world instead of committing ourselves to the task of reaching the lost and meeting the needs of the world. We must follow the example of Christ.

Mat 20:28 *"Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Luke 22:27 *"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."*

John 13:4-5 *So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

Phil 2:6-8 *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!*

4. The Saviour was called to live a life of total trust in God (v. 4). From a human perspective, the Saviour had meagre, disappointing results on earth (John 1:11). Christ had few followers who really trusted in Him. From all appearances, His mission seemed a failure, especially when He was crucified upon the cross and His apostles scattered for their lives. But note what the Saviour said centuries before He came to earth: He would cast Himself and the results totally upon God. The results were in God's hand, and the Saviour left them and the reward due Him entirely up to God. Although He had laboured faithfully to the point of utter exhaustion and the giving of His life, He trusted that God would make His mission a success.

Mat 4:3-4 *The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

Mat 4:10-11 *Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan: For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.*

John 14:23 *Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."*

John 15:10 *"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."*

Rom 5:19 *For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

Heb 10:9 *Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second.*

5. The Saviour was called to redeem and return Israel to God (v. 5). He was sent "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mat 15:24). He was sent to lead them to God so they could be delivered from the bondages of sin and death, live righteous lives and be assured of living eternally with God (John 3:16-17). Although the Jews rejected the Lord Jesus, God honoured and strengthened Him for His task of bringing Israel back to God, and the Saviour was successful. Remember that the very first followers of Christ were Jewish believers and that the first church was also made up of Jewish believers. Moreover, when the LORD returns to earth, a large number of Jews will know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour. They will trust Him and become acceptable to God. God will receive them into His eternal kingdom.

But note what the LORD, the Father of the Saviour, says: reaching Israel alone is too small a task for Christ, for He is God's Servant. God's Servant deserves a far greater task. Therefore, God enlarged His mission on earth, that of reaching the Gentiles (point 6).

6. The Saviour was called to be a *light* to the Gentiles. In other words, Christ was to be the Saviour of the entire world and to bring salvation to every human being. Note that two points are being stressed:
 - => The Person sent by God is Himself the Saviour. If people wish to be saved, they must approach God through the person of Jesus Christ. He is the Mediator, the High Priest, who brings people to God. As He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6).
 - => The Person sent by God was given the awesome task of taking God's salvation to the ends of the earth. Because of its overwhelming importance, God's message of salvation must be taken to every human being. And the task of proclaiming the message must not fail.

Luke 3:4-6 *As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"*

John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

John 9:39-41 *Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."*

Acts 2:21 *And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

Rom 10:9-13 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Col 1:13 *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.*

1 Tim 2:4 *Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

Titus 2:11-12 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

7. The Saviour was called to suffer, to be despised and rejected by people (53:3-7; Mark 15:1-41; John 1:10-11). The Saviour would become the *suffering Servant* of God. He would be subjected to humiliation at the hands of people, be ridiculed and mocked, assaulted and abused, despised and rejected, scourged and crucified.

Notice who is revealing that the Saviour will be the suffering Servant of God. It is God Himself, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel who reveals this fact. The Saviour's sufferings have a purpose — to redeem or pay the ransom to set people free from sin, death and the coming judgment. As the Holy One of Israel, the LORD always acts on the basis of His holiness, always does what is righteous and just. And the right thing to do is to fulfil His promises, in particular the promise to send the Saviour into the world to provide redemption. Through the suffering of the Saviour, the LORD does the righteous thing for the human race: He provides redemption for all who trust, obey and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 15:29-30 *Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days. Come down from the cross and save yourself."*

Luke 16:14 *The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.*

John 10:20 *Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and is raving mad. Why listen to him?"*

Phil 2:8 *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!*

Isa 53:3-7 *He is despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

8. The Saviour was called to be honoured by the rulers and citizens of the world (v. 7). While on earth, the Saviour was abused and crucified. However, after His sufferings, He was raised from the dead and exalted as LORD by the power of God Himself. When the Saviour returns to set up God's kingdom on earth, all the citizens of the world will honour Him. All kings, princes and rulers will rise up from their thrones in utter shock and amazement that Jesus Christ is truly LORD. Prostrating themselves before Him, they will willingly surrender the authority of all the nations of the earth, and they will honour Christ as LORD of the universe (45:24; 52:15; Phil 2:10-11).

Mark 16:19 *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

Luke 22:69 *But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.*

Acts 2:32-36 *God raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make our enemies a footstool for your feet."' Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

Acts 5:30-31 *The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead — whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

Eph 1:20 *Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Rev 5:11-12 *Then I looked and I heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"*

9. The Saviour was called to be God's covenant for the people (vv. 8-13). Note that it is the person of Christ Himself that is the covenant. Through Him, God pledges to fulfil all His promises. The Saviour is to be the *Mediator* through whom God brings to the world the promise of salvation and all the other promises He has made down through the ages. The promises given to Israel, as well as to the Gentiles, are to be fulfilled through the Saviour. Note that God promised to answer the prayers of his suffering Servant and to help Him in the day of salvation. Throughout His life on earth, the Saviour suffered agonizing pain due to the continual hostility of people, in particular the religionists. Bearing the weight of so much opposition broke His heart, causing Him to go before the LORD with loud cries and tears, begging for help and strength to complete His mission. This is exactly what Scripture says:

Heb 5:7-9 *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

God heard the strong cries and saw the tears of His suffering Servant. Filled with a heart of love for His Son (John 3:16), God answered the Saviour's prayers. He met His need, whatever the need of the hour was. God protected the Saviour in order to guarantee that He would become the *covenant* for the people, the *pledge* that God would fulfil His promises to His people. Five promises in particular are mentioned:

- a. Through the Saviour, God promises to restore the land and to assign the inheritance promised to the people (v. 8b). This is a reference to the inheritance God gave each tribe when the land was divided under the leadership of Joshua (see notes, Josh

14:1-15). When Christ returns to earth to set up God's kingdom, the true believers among the Israelites will receive their promised inheritances. But so will all Gentile believers. In that day, God will reward every believer with the inheritance promised in His Holy Word.

***Acts 20:32** Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

***Col 1:12** Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

***1 Pet 1:3-5** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

- b. Through the Saviour, God promises to set the people free from captivity and darkness (v. 9a). Israel's deliverance from the captivity in Babylon is a clear picture of the Saviour delivering God's people from the bondages of sin, death and the coming judgment. The Saviour *redeems* and *sets free* all those who put their trust in Him.

***Rom 3:23-24** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

***Titus 2:13-14** While we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

***Heb 9:12-14** He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

***1 Pet 1:18-19** For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

- c. Through the Saviour, God promises to guide His people and to provide for and protect them (vv. 9b-10). God has always given this wonderful promise to His people, to all who truly believe and follow Him. Note that no matter where people go, the LORD promises to meet their needs along the way. Even the barren hills will provide food for true believers. In compassion, the LORD promises to guide and lead His

people, meeting whatever needs they have. Whether Jews or Gentiles, if people truly trust the LORD, their needs will be met.

Mat 6:33 *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

Psa 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Psa 31:19 *How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

Isa 25:4 *You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall.*

Isa 30:21 *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 43:1-2 *But now, this is what the LORD says — he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”*

- d. Through the Saviour, God removes all obstacles and guides His people back to the promised land (vv. 11-12). This is a wonderful picture of people coming to the Saviour from all parts of the earth. No barrier can keep God from bringing believers to the Saviour. In the last days of human history, a remnant of the Jews will return to the promised land to worship the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will establish the seat of His government in Jerusalem.

Acts 13:48 *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*

Acts 15:7 *After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.”*

Acts 28:28 *“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”*

Psa 22:28 *For dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.*

Isa 45:22 *“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”*

- e. Through the Saviour, God promises to comfort His people and to have mercy on them in their affliction (v. 13).

2 Cor 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Isa 12:1 In that day you will say: "I will praise you LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me."

Isa 51:3 The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

Psa 103:17 But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children.

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. ■