**Biblical Theology**

Lesson 18 – A Biblical Theology of the Servant of the Lord

**Garden of Eden**

1. Genesis 2:5 which says “there was no man to work [serve] the ground” implies that one reason Adam was created was to serve God by serving the ground. In fact, in verse 15, God places Adam in the garden in Eden to work [serve] it and keep it. Adam was to serve and preserve the creation of God as His servant. He was also to serve God by ruling over creation and exercising dominion.
2. But Adam and Eve abdicate their responsibility as well as acknowledging being servants of God when they sin. There will continue to be service, but now it is a cursed service associated with toil and pain. Stephen Dempster says, “The Fall frustrates service.”

**Old Testament After the Fall**

1. Cain abdicates his role as a servant when he asks “Am I my brother’s keeper?” in Genesis 4. This is the same “keeping” that Adam and Eve were to have of the garden in Eden as God’s servants. Cain now has sin as his master (Gen. 4:7).
2. Noah faithfully fulfills his role as God’s servant by building the ark through which creation will be preserved through God’s catastrophic judgment and Noah is re-given the Edenic task by “being fruitful and multiplying,” ruling over animals that now fear mankind, as well as being given both plants and animals for food (Gen. 9:1-7).
3. Abraham acknowledges that he is a servant to the Lord in Genesis 18:3, “and [he] said, ‘O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.’” Abraham acknowledges his servanthood to God by being obedient to the point of sacrificing the promised child, Isaac. Servants are obedient to their master. Abraham is called by God “my servant” in Genesis 26:24 when talking to Isaac.
4. While the idea or language of “servant of the Lord” is also applied to others such as Joshua (Judges 2:8), Job (Job 1:8), and the nation of Israel (Isa. 49:3), by and large the “servant of the Lord” idea is most prominently applied in the Old Testament to Moses and David.
   1. Exod 4:10 – “Moses said to the Lord, “Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant…” See also Num 11:11, Deut 3:24, 1 Kings 8:53, Neh 1:7-8, 9:14.
   2. Exod 14:31 – “…so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses.” See also Joshua 9:24, 1 Kings 8:56, and Psalm 105:26.
   3. Deut 34:5 – “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there…” See also Josh 1:1, 13, 15; 8:31, 33; 12:6; 13:8; 22:2; 2 Kings 18:12; Neh 10:30; 1 Chron 6:34; 2 Chron 1:3; 24:6.
   4. Joshua 1:2 – “Moses my servant is dead….” See also Num 12:7-8, Josh 1:7, 2 Kings 21:8, Malachi 3:22
   5. 1 Samuel 23:10 – “Then David said, ‘O Lord, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come….to destroy the city on my account.” See also 2 Samuel 7:19-21, 25-29; 1 Kings 3:6; 8:24-26; 1 Chron 17:17-19, 23-27; 2 Chron 6:15-16; Psalm 27:9; 69:17; 86:2, 4.
   6. 1 Samuel 25:39 – “When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, ‘Blessed by the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing.” See also 1 Kings 8:66; 2 Kings 8:19; Psalm 35:27; 78:70; 144:10.
   7. Psalm 36 title – “To the Choirmaster. Of David, the servant of the Lord.” See also the title to Psalm 18.
   8. 2 Samuel 3:18 – “Now then bring it about, for the Lord has promised David, saying, ‘By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel…” See also 1 Kings 11:13, 36, 38; 2 Kings 19:34; Isa 37:35; Jer 33:21; Ezek 34:23-24; Psalm 89:4, 21.
5. Between “my servant,” “his servant,” “your servant,” and “the servant of the Lord/God,” David is described this way a total of 66 times in the Old Testament and Moses a total of 38 times.
6. Dempster summarizes the OT servant of the Lord like this, “In the Hebrew Scriptures, to be classed as a ‘Servant of the Lord’ is to have a special relationship to God in which an individual is a subordinate to the divine Lord.”
7. The goal of God’s people in the OT and all of creation was to serve the Lord. God’s purposes for His people is expressed and advanced through His many servants of whom primary are Abraham, Moses, and David. Yet all of these servants failed in one way or another so the prophetic literature of the OT prophesies of a coming “Servant of the Lord” who will be from David and be the true Israel/Jacob.
8. Zechariah 3:8 – “…behold, I will bring my servant the Branch [of David].” Isaiah 42:1 – “Behold 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 52:13 – “Behold, my servant shall act wisely; He shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.” Isaiah 53:11 – “…by His knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” Ezekiel 34:23 – “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and He shall feed them: He shall feed them and be their shepherd.” Ezekiel 37:25 – “They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever.” Hosea 3:5 – “Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to His goodness in the latter days.” Daniel 7:14 – “And to Him [Son of Man] was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.”
9. This future servant of the Lord will be both servant and King who will faithfully suffer in the place of covenant-breakers by receiving their punishment and bearing the curse of the law in their place. Thus He make people from all over the world His servants serving “The Servant of the Lord.” He will make people like Adam once was and was supposed to be.

**New Testament**

1. A few individuals in the New Testament are indicated as servants of the Lord. Mary says to the angel in Luke 1:38, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord…” 2 Timothy 2:24 calls ministers “the Lord’s servant” and then goes on to give character description of what a minister is to be like. Paul calls himself “a servant of God” in Titus 1:1, while both Paul and Silas are called “servants of the Most High God” by a possessed slave girl in Acts 16:17. Many times the apostles are called “servants of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:1; Gal 1:10; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1).
2. However, the bulk of the “servant of the Lord” is reserved for Jesus. Acts 4:27 says, “for truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus…” Matthew 12:18 quotes from Isaiah and applies it to Jesus saying, “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen…” Acts 3:13 says, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant Jesus…”
3. As “The Servant of the Lord,” Jesus is the faithful Adam and Israel who endures but does not give into temptation in the wilderness and in fact says, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve” (Matt. 4:10) He teaches “You cannot serve God and money” (Matt 6:24 // Luke 16:13) and says, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28 // Mark 10:45). Also Luke 22:27 which says, “I am among you as the one who serves.”
4. Jesus also teaches that His people must be like Him in serving. He says in Luke 22:26, “Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.” And John 12:26, “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.” Romans 12:11 says, “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord” and 14:18 which states, “Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.” Paul tells us in Galatians 5:13, “but through love serve one another.” Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:10, “As each has received a gift, us it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”
5. Those who do not follow Jesus are said to “serve” the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). They do not “serve our Lord Christ, but [serve] their own appetites” according to Romans 16:18. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 implies that those who do not turn to “serve the living and true God” instead serve idols. Hebrews 9:14 implies that those who do not have their consciences purified by the blood of Christ serve “dead works.”
6. Stephen Dempster summarizes it like this: “The NT epistles further clarify the nature of the work of Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT anticipation of a servant who would suffer for His people and be exalted. Just as the mission of one servant is carried on by many servants in Isaiah, apostles and believers in the NT are viewed as servants continuing the mission of Jesus. Just as He was called to serve them, so they are all called to a life of service.”

**New Heavens/Earth**

1. Revelation 7 which pictures the final consummation and eternity in the New Heavens/Earth says of the 144,000 [all the elect of God], “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” Revelation 7:15 says of believers who are clothed in white, “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple…” Revelation 11:18 puts it, “The nations raged, but Your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, but small and great…” Revelation 19:2 says that God’s wrath at the 2nd Coming is to avenge “the blood of His servants.” From the throne of God comes the call to worship, “Praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him, small and great” (Rev. 19:5). Revelation 22:3 states, “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him.”
2. For all eternity in the New Heavens & Earth, THE Servant of the Lord will be with His servants.

**Take-Away**

1. Dempster summarizes the whole “servant of the Lord” theme this way: “Human beings, called to be servant monarchs of creation, fell from that lofty position in an act of treason against their Creator. In grace God began the restoration of His creation through the promise of a seed that would conquer the seductive serpent. Israel was constituted to be God’s servant nation to the world, to be a royal priesthood. An individual servant, Moses, was able to intercede successfully for the national servant, Israel, when it sinned, and it was allowed to enter the land of promise. David became an even more dominant servant figure than Moses. David interceded successfully like Moses for his people during a time of catastrophe. But Moses and David were deeply flawed human beings. Nevertheless, there was a hope that an individual would come from this line who would bring about the final restoration of creation by meeting the demands of the covenant. This royal servant appears in the prophets and is completely righteous. He suffers for the sins of the covenant breakers from Israel and from the nations. Thus, a new covenant is made by this servant to fulfil this aim. Jesus Christ fulfils this role in the New Testament. By virtue of His death and resurrection, creation will be restored and a great multitude of individuals from every tribe and nation will serve Him and each other forever and ever.”
2. ARP Form of Government 1.7: “All of the Church’s people, in every phase of their lives, are to be God’s ministers to the world by being servants of His Son, the King of the Church.”