

## DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

### Lesson 9 Christ the Servant

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In previous lessons we have learned that Jesus was fully God and fully man, the two natures united together in one “hypostasis.” Jesus was a single person with dual natures. The Scriptures make it clear that when Jesus was born He not only was born to die, but to serve. This is an amazing thought. God would not only humble himself by taking on the form of a man in Jesus Christ, but He would also play the role of a servant or slave. We often think of Jesus in His glory, exaltation, and majesty, but do you ever think of Him as a “servant” or “slave?” Jesus came and did nothing but the Father’s will and it was the Father’s will that He serve others. One of Jesus’ purposes in coming to earth was to model perfect servanthood to both the Father and men leaving us an example to follow. In this lesson we will examine Christ the servant. We will find practical application for being a servant like Jesus.

#### I. DEFINITION OF OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT TERMS FOR SERVANT

##### A. The Old Testament Word for Slave

1. *“The most basic idea of the [Hebrew] word ‘ebed’ is that of a slave. . . The most significant use of the term servant is as a messianic designation, the most prominent personal, technical term to represent the Old Testament teaching of the Messiah. The central teaching passages on this theme are found in the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah.”<sup>1</sup>*
2. *“Many people find the concept of servanthood repulsive, since it seems to be demeaning and undignified. True, a servant is limited by the will of his master, a servant is dependent on his master for all his life needs, and he has no freedom to do anything except what his master desires. But there is another perspective concerning the role of a servant, at least a servant of God.*

*The word ebed (‘servant’) ranges in meaning from a slave to a vassal king but always refers to one characterized by dependence and servitude. Royal officials and personal representatives of a king were thus designated ‘servants.’ The term ‘servant’ indicated a degree of honor, depending on the position of the one served. To be the ‘servant of God’ denoted the highest honor.*

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<sup>1</sup>Theological Word Book of the Old Testament, pg. 639.

*This means that to be a servant leader under the Lord Jesus Christ is to gain the highest honor since it enables the one who occupies the position to share in the very glory and prestige of the Lord of the universe. The following definition conveys the concept of servant leadership: a servant is someone under the authority of another who voluntarily serves for that one's benefit with a spirit of humble dependence and who finds his freedom, fulfillment, and significance in the limits of his service.<sup>2</sup>*

## **B. New Testament**

1. *“In the New Testament, doulos is frequently used to designate a master’s slave (one bound to him), but also a follower of Christ (a “bondslave” of Christ). The term points to a relation of absolute dependence, in which the master and the servant stand on opposite sides — the former having a full claim, the latter having a full commitment. The servant can exercise no will or initiative on his or her own. . . . Another common New Testament term, diakonos, derives from a verb meaning “to wait at a table,” “to serve,” As the Son of man, Jesus “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”<sup>3</sup>*
2. *“A slave, originally the lowest term in the scale of servitude, came also to mean one who gives himself up to the will of another, e.g., 1 Cor. 7:23; Rom. 6:17, 20, . . . the Apostle Paul intimates (1) that he had been formerly a bondslave of Satan, and (2) that, having been bought by Christ, he was now a willing slave, bound to his new Master.”<sup>4</sup>*
3. *“In writing of Jesus and His servanthood, Luke in the book of Acts also uses the same word (3:26; 4:27, 30). But in Romans 15:8, the apostle Paul writes of Christ as the diakonos. Generally, this word sometimes is used of one who takes on the role of a servant or deacon in order to accomplish a specific task. Diakonos is made up of two words that together mean ‘through the dirt.’ This describes one who takes on the lowly position of serving by ‘shuffling through the dirt.’<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 144 (144:326-327). Dallas Theological Seminary. Quote inside quote from F. Duane Lindsey, “The Call of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1–9,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139 (January-March 1982): 28, n.14.

<sup>3</sup> *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, pg. 725-26.

<sup>4</sup> W.E. Vine and F.F. Bruce, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan NJ: Revell, 1981; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996), 2:1-139.

<sup>5</sup> *Conservative Theological Journal* Volume 3 (3:371). Tyndale Theological Seminary.

## II. SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO CHRIST AS SERVANT

- A. **Isa. 42:1-7**<sup>6</sup> “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 “He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. 3 “A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. 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.” 5 Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it And spirit to those who walk in it, 6 “I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison. 8 “I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images. 9 “Behold, the former things have come to pass, Now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.”
- B. **Isa. 49:1-13**<sup>7</sup> Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me. 2 He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver. 3 He said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.” 4 But I said, “I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the Lord, And My reward with My God.” 5 And now says the Lord, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the Lord, And My God is My strength), 6 He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” 7 Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, “Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.” 8 Thus says the Lord, “In a favorable time I have answered You, And in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages; 9 Saying to those who are bound, ‘Go forth,’ To those who are in darkness, ‘Show yourselves.’ Along the roads they will feed, And their pasture will be on all bare heights. 10 “They will not hunger or thirst,

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<sup>6</sup>Mt. 12:17-21 quotes Isa. 42:1-3.

<sup>7</sup>Acts 13:47 quotes part of Isa. 49:6.

Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has compassion on them will lead them And will guide them to springs of water. 11 “I will make all My mountains a road, And My highways will be raised up. 12 “Behold, these will come from afar; And lo, these will come from the north and from the west, And these from the land of Sinim.” 13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people And will have compassion on His afflicted.

- C. **Isa. 50:4-11** The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. 5 The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back. 6 I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. 7 For the Lord God helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. 8 He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. 9 Behold, the Lord God helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them. 10 Who is among you that fears the Lord, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. 11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle yourselves with firebrands, Walk in the light of your fire And among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand: You will lie down in torment.
- D. **Isa. 52:13-53:12**<sup>8</sup> Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. 14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men. 15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand. 1 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. 3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And

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<sup>8</sup>Mt. 8:17 quotes Isa. 53:4; Lk. 22:37 quotes Isa. 53:12; Jn. 12:38 quotes Isa. 53:1; Acts 8:32-33 quote Isa. 53:7-8; Rom. 15:21 quotes Isa. 52:15; I Pet. 2:22 quotes Isa. 53:9.

by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? 9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. 10 But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

The *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* comments:

*“It is difficult to get away from the idea that the concept of servanthood and lowliness belongs within the sphere of royalty (Zec 9:9). The concept of the Messiah filling the complementary offices of priest and king is incontrovertible (Ps 110:1–4); a suffering priest-king is far less obvious. Some among the Talmudic writers apparently recognized the likelihood that the Messiah would have to suffer. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin 98b, the Messiah is said to bear sicknesses and pain. Among the prayers for the Day of Atonement may be found the words of Eleazar ben Qalir (perhaps as late as ad 1000): “Our righteous Messiah has departed from us; we are horror-stricken, and there is none to justify us. Our iniquities and the yoke of our transgressions he carries, and is wounded for our transgressions. He bears on his shoulders our sins to find pardon for our iniquities. May we be healed by his stripes.” In a similar vein Rabbi Eliyya de Vidas writes, “The meaning of ‘He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,’ is that since the Messiah bears our iniquities, which produce the effect of His being bruised, it follows that whosoever will not admit that the Messiah thus suffers for our iniquities must endure and suffer for them himself.” For all this, it is highly doubtful that anyone imagined the Messiah would accomplish his salvational work by means of his own death (cf. Is 53:12). When rabbinic speculation failed to satisfactorily harmonize the paradoxical facts of humiliation and exaltation, some hypothesized that God would send a Messiah to suffer as well as a Messiah to reign. Biblically, it is evident that the Anointed One’s terrible ordeal of suffering is but the necessary prelude*

*to infinite glory. He is pictured not only as a great king (52:13; 53:12) but also as humble (53:2), humiliated (52:14), rejected (53:3), and bearing the consequences of mankind's rebellion (vv 5–6). Yet he is raised up to intercede for, and richly bless, his people (v 12). The Messiah, having accomplished that full obedience that Adam and Israel failed to achieve, will bring Israel and the nations back to God (42:18–19; 49:3, 6).”<sup>9</sup>*

- E. **Zech. 3:8** ‘Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.
1. **Isa. 11:1** Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
  2. **Jer. 33:15** ‘In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.
- F. **Mk. 10:35-45** James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” 36 And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” 37 They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory.” 38 But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” 39 They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. 40 “But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” 41 Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. 42 Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. 43 “But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. 45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”
- G. **Lk. 22:24-27** And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. 25 And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called

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<sup>9</sup>W. A. Elwell & P. W. Comfort, P. W., *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale reference library (887). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers

'Benefactors.' 26 "But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. 27 "For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

- H. **Jn. 5:30; 6:38** "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. . . **Jn. 6:38** "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
  
- I. **John 13:12-15** So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.
  
- J. **Acts 3:13, 26;** "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. . . 26 "For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."
  
- K. **Acts 4:27, 30** "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, . . . 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."
  
- L. **Phil. 2:3-8** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

### III. THOUGHTS TO PONDER

- A. *“Jesus’ servanthood radically revised the ethics of Jew and Greek alike, because He equated service to God with service to others. When we minister to the needs of the hungry or the lonely, we actually minister to Christ (**Matt. 25:31,46**). And when we fail to do so, we sin against God (**James 2:14,17; 4:17**). In this light, all who took part in the fellowship of service were ministers.”<sup>10</sup>*
- B. *“Perhaps the ultimate and most scandalous servanthood of Christ is in the washing of His servants’ feet (**Jn. 13:5, 7-8, 12, 14-15**). He washed, but was not washed by any, since He needed no cleansing from sin. He loved His own and loved them to the end (**Jn. 13:1**). He is Lord, Teacher and Servant (vss. 13-16) who with basin and towel challenges all human notions of consecration, service and greatness.”<sup>11</sup>*
- C. *“The call to salvation includes a call to servanthood, to follow the Lord, who “did not come to be served, but to serve” (**Mark 10:45**). Servanthood in this general calling extends to all who follow Christ. Paul exhorted believers to remember what they were when God called them (**1 Cor. 1:26**), and as Christian servants they were not to boast. The weak were called to confound the wise and the strong. Having the treasure of the gospel in “clay jars” demonstrates the all-surpassing power that comes from God (**2 Cor. 4:7**). And dedicated service is to be in response to the mercy of God (**Rom. 12:1**).”<sup>12</sup>*
- D. *“Although Christ had a perfect right to demand obedience and obeisance, He became a servant among us. He washed the disciples’ feet – and told them to follow His example. Paul applies His example by urging us to “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (**Phil. 2:3**).”<sup>13</sup>*
- E. *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (**10:45**). Servanthood is a concept not expected by the disciples. By comprehending the essence of Jesus’ ministry as servanthood,*

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<sup>10</sup>Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Rev. ed. of: *Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary*.; Includes index. Nashville: T. Nelson.

<sup>11</sup> *Ashland Theological Journal* Volume 10 (10:27).

<sup>12</sup> *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 157 (157:94). Dallas Theological Seminary.

<sup>13</sup> *Reformation and Revival* Volume 8 (vnp.8.4.139-8.4.140). Reformation and Revival Ministries.



*the disciples will comprehend the essence of discipleship as servanthood, including their motivation, position, ambition, expectations, and example. Jesus did not come as a potentate who expected groveling servants to cater to his every personal whim; he came as a servant to give his life to save those who were his subjects. That is a completely unique type of Master, who demands an equally unique type of discipleship from his followers.”<sup>14</sup>*

#### IV. APPLICATION OF THE SERVANT HOOD OF CHRIST

A. Thomas Watson says there are seven characteristics of a man who is a servant of God and not men. ***The servant would rather die by persecution than live by perjury (Psa. 56:12).***<sup>15</sup>

1. A servant leaves all others, and confines himself to one master.
2. A servant is not independent, at his own disposal, but at the disposal of his master.
3. A servant is bound.
4. A servant not only wears his master's clothes, but does his work.
5. A servant follows his master; thus a godly man is a servant of God.
6. A servant is satisfied with his master's allowance.
7. A servant will stand up for the honor of his master.

B. How do you think Christ's example as servant applies to:

1. Those who are Christians?
2. Those who are married?
3. Children still living at home?
4. Employees?
5. Bosses?

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<sup>14</sup>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology Volume 8 (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004; 2006), vnp.8.3.63-8.3.64.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man's Picture*, pgs. 37-39.

- C. What does Jesus' willingness to become a servant for those who despised, rejected, and crucified Him, tell us about His love for us?
- D. Why do you think most people in the world want to be served and why is it that Jesus tells us the way to greatness is to be a servant of all?
- E. In heaven, what role do you think service will play for men and angels?

**“Serve the Lord with gladness.”  
Psalm 100:2**

Delight in divine service is a token of acceptance. Those who serve God with a sad countenance, because they do what is unpleasant to them, are not serving him at all; they bring the form of homage, but the life is absent. Our God requires no slaves to grace his throne; he is the Lord of the empire of love, and would have his servants dressed in the livery of joy. The angels of God serve him with songs, not with groans; a murmur or a sigh would be a mutiny in their ranks. That obedience which is not voluntary is disobedience, for the Lord looketh at the heart, and if he seeth that we serve him from force, and not because we love him, he will reject our offering. Service coupled with cheerfulness is heart-service, and therefore true. Take away joyful willingness from the Christian, and you have removed the test of his sincerity. If a man be driven to battle, he is no patriot; but he who marches into the fray with flashing eye and beaming face, singing, “ It is sweet for one' s country to die,” proves himself to be sincere in his patriotism. Cheerfulness is the support of our strength; in the joy of the Lord are we strong. It acts as the remover of difficulties. It is to our service what oil is to the wheels of a railway carriage. Without oil the axle soon grows hot, and accidents occur; and if there be not a holy cheerfulness to oil our wheels, our spirits will be clogged with weariness. The man who is cheerful in his service of God, proves that obedience is his element; he can sing,

“ Make me to walk in thy commands,  
' Tis a delightful road.”

Reader, let us put this question—do you serve the Lord with gladness? Let us show to the people of the world, who think our religion to be slavery, that it is to us a delight and a joy! Let our gladness proclaim that we serve a good Master.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, Evening, Jan. 9th. Logos Bible Software.