

74 42:19-20

(19) Who is blind but my servant, or deaf, as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he that should be perfect, or so blind as the LORD's servant? (20) You have seen many things, but you do not observe; your ears have been opened, but no one listens.

After looking at the blindness of those trusting in idols, the prophet expresses amazement that anyone who has enjoyed the great privilege given to Israel should fail both to realize his responsibility and to recognize the true meaning of life. Terrible as it is that men should forsake the living God and trust imaginary beings that are not gods at all, it is even worse for those who have been given God's revelation to fail to live up to the responsibility that He has set before them.

Here it is declared that even the idol worshipers are not as blind as the LORD's Servant. This term was used twice in 41:8-9 to show why God had called Israel in the first place, and thus to explain why He would never give them up. The Statements in verse 19 might seem very difficult to reconcile with the declaration in Verses 1-7 of this same chapter that the Servant will accomplish the work of bringing justice to all the nations, or with the description there of the manner in which He will perform this work. In order to reconcile the apparent contradiction, it is necessary to recognize that responsibility for the performance of the work rests upon the whole nation of Israel, even though its actual performance may require the divine selection and enduement of one particular individual. These verses lament the inability of Israel to perform the task, an inability that involves a definite failure to follow the LORD as she should.

Verse 19 consists of four statements, the first and last of which are almost identical. Blindness and deafness are attributed to the Servant, who is also called the messenger whom God has sent. It was an important part of Israel's function to witness to God's power. Israel was God's messenger to the world. The responsibility of the LORD's Servant rests upon Israel, and yet Israel is blind and deaf.