

Isaiah 49

QUESTIONS

1. What is the Servant's relationship to Yahweh? What might the sword and arrow imagery indicate? Who is the Servant sent to rescue? Where does the Servant bring those he rescues? (To Jerusalem?) What response does he face from the nations? What emotions does he experience? Does he appear to be a political leader?
2. Give your reasons for identifying the Servant in this "servant song" (49:1-6, possibly also 7-8) as Cyrus or Isaiah (as did the Ethiopian eunuch—cf. Acts 8:27+) or Israel or the Messiah (as did Philip in the same passage), or a combination.
3. Isa 49:4 describes a Servant who thinks, "I have toiled in vain; I have exhausted myself for nothing." Are there indications in the Gospels that Jesus may have experienced this?
4. A suffrage from the Daily Morning Prayer service in the 1549 Anglican Prayer Book reads
Give peace in our time, O Lord.

Because there is none other that fightest for us, but only thou, O God.

This calls to mind Isa 49:25, "I myself will fight with those who fight with you." God is also described as fighting for his people, in Isa 31:4-5:

As a lion or a young lion growls over its prey, and—when a band of shepherds is called out against it—is not terrified by their shouting or daunted by their noise, so the Lord of hosts will come down to fight upon Mount Zion and upon its hill. Like birds hovering overhead, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will spare and rescue it. (Isa 31:4-5, NRSV)

Unlike Isaiah in these verses, or the 1549 APB, we generally do not speak of God as *fighting*. In what way might this be a valid image of God? Does God fight for you? Who or what else does God fight for? What did Jesus or Paul fight for?

5. In 2 Cor 6:2, Paul quotes Isa 49:8. Carson & Beale (*Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*) understand Paul in this way:

We cannot know whether the Corinthians could recall the context of the verse quoted from Isa 49, but for Paul it may be a pointer to how he saw his ministry: he probably regarded Jesus as the "Servant" and saw himself called into the ministry of this Servant. His message of reconciliation was a fulfillment of the OT promises...

As Martin puts it, "Paul is probably urging the Corinthians to rededicate their lives to the Christian ideal." If they do not obey, then there is a sense, as with the Servant in Isa 49:4a, that Paul's efforts will be "in vain."

Read 2 Cor 5:16-6:2. Is this how Paul is using Isaiah? Is he abusing it? What "time of my favor" was Isaiah referring to? Who was being saved?