

Isaiah 42:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold
thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of
the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

Analysis

This verse intensifies the Servant's commission with covenant language. 'I the LORD have called thee in righteousness' emphasizes divine initiative—the Servant doesn't volunteer but is summoned by God's sovereign purpose. 'In righteousness' (be-tsedeq) indicates both God's righteous character motivating the call and the righteous manner of the Servant's ministry. 'Will hold thine hand' portrays intimate guidance and protection—God personally sustaining His Servant through the mission. The dual purpose follows: 'give thee for a covenant of the people' (le-berit am) suggests the Servant Himself becomes the covenant, not merely its mediator. Christ embodies the new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20), personally guaranteeing its terms. 'For a light of the Gentiles' (le-or goyim) expands the mission beyond Israel. Light dispels darkness, reveals truth, guides safely, and enables life—all fulfilled in Christ, 'the light of the world' (John 8:12). Simeon recognized this at Jesus's presentation: 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' (Luke 2:32).

Historical Context

This passage appears in the first Servant Song's conclusion (42:1-9), defining the Servant's threefold ministry: establishing justice (v.1), being a covenant (v.6), and opening blind eyes (v.7). Ancient Israel understood covenant as the foundation of relationship with God—think Abraham, Moses, David. Yet this 'new covenant' prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31-34) would surpass previous ones, written on hearts not stone. Jesus claimed this covenant at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:28), His

blood sealing the promised new relationship. Paul explains that Christ's work brings Gentiles into God's people (Ephesians 2:11-22), fulfilling Isaiah's light-bearing mission to all nations.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus being the covenant itself (not just mediating it) change your understanding of salvation's security?
2. In what ways are you called to be a 'light' to those around you, reflecting Christ's light-bearing mission?

Interlinear Text

אֲנִי י' H589	יְהוָה H3068	קָרָאתִי יְךָ H7121	בְּצִדִּיק H6664	וְאָחֳזֵק H2388	בְּיָדְךָ H3027
I the LORD	have called	thee in righteousness	and will hold	thine hand	
וְאֶצְרֶךָ H5341	וְאֶתֵּנֶךָ H5414	לְבֵרִית H1285	עַם H5971	לְאֹר H216	
and will keep	thee and give	thee for a covenant	of the people	for a light	
גִּוִּיִּם: H1471	of the Gentiles				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 2:32 (Light): A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Acts 13:47 (Light): For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 49:8 (Covenant): Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

Isaiah 49:6 (Light): And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

John 8:12 (Light): Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

1 Peter 2:9 (Light): But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Hebrews 9:15 (Covenant): And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 13:20 (Covenant): Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Isaiah 26:3 (Parallel theme): Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

Acts 26:23 (Light): That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.