

Isaiah 49:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

Analysis

Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. This verse explicitly names the Gentiles (goyim, גּוֹיִם) as instruments of Israel's restoration, a stunning reversal since Gentiles had been Israel's oppressors. God's uplifted hand (nasah yadi, נָשַׁא יָדִי) signals a sovereign decree or oath, while the "standard" (nes, נֵס) is a rallying banner or signal flag for assembling troops or peoples.

The imagery of Gentiles carrying Jewish children with tender care—"in their arms" and "upon their shoulders"—reverses the usual biblical picture of Gentiles carrying away captives as spoil. Instead, they become caring servants, gently transporting God's people to their homeland. This foreshadows the Great Commission where Gentile believers serve as witnesses bringing others to Christ.

From a Reformed perspective, this prophecy undergoes Christological transformation: Christ Himself is the "standard" lifted up (John 3:14-15, 12:32—"if I be lifted up"). The gospel becomes the signal drawing all peoples to God. Gentiles don't merely serve ethnic Israel but become fellow heirs (Ephesians 3:6). The careful carrying depicts pastoral care—the church nurtures spiritual children toward maturity. This verse demolishes ethnic exclusivism, establishing God's universal redemptive purpose accomplished through Christ's work.

Historical Context

Historical fulfillment began when Persian Emperor Cyrus (a Gentile) decreed Israel's return and financed temple reconstruction (Ezra 1:1-4). Gentile rulers like Darius and Artaxerxes supported Jewish restoration (Ezra 6:1-12, Nehemiah 2:1-8). This pattern of Gentile aid reversed the Babylonian and Assyrian conquests.

The ultimate fulfillment came through the gospel's spread. Gentile Christians became the primary carriers of the faith, with missionary movements throughout history bringing spiritual children from every nation into God's family. The church's demographics shifted from predominantly Jewish (first century) to overwhelmingly Gentile, yet maintaining covenantal continuity with the faith of Abraham. Archaeological evidence of early Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire and beyond demonstrates this prophetic fulfillment.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this prophecy challenge ethnic or cultural superiority within the church?
2. In what ways are you called to "carry" others toward Christ with tender care?
3. How has Christ as the lifted-up standard drawn you to God?

Interlinear Text

בָּהּ אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים תִּנְשָׁאָנָה: אַל
H3541 Thus saith the Lord GOD H2009 Behold I will lift up H413
H559 H136 H3069 H5375 H413

גּוֹים יְמִינֵךְ אֶל יְמִינֵךְ עַמְּךָ אֶרְךָ
to the Gentiles mine hand H413 to the people and set up my standard H5251
H1471 H3027 H5971 H7311 H5921

וְיִבְרְכָה אֶת יְמִינֵךְ וְיִתְּבָרֵךְ אֶת יְמִינֵךְ עַל
and they shall bring thy sons in their arms and thy daughters H1323
H935 H1121 H2684 H1323

כְּתַת יְמִינֵךְ תִּנְשָׁאָנָה:
upon their shoulders Behold I will lift up H5375

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 86:9 (References Lord): All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

Luke 13:29 (References God): And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.