

Never Forsaken...Never Forgotten

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 49:13-16

The institution of marriage is honored as an example of the relationship between Christ (The Husband) and His Church (The Bride – see Ephesians 5:22-33). The position of motherhood is honored as an example of the faithful, nurturing love of God (Isaiah 49:15; 66:13 cp. Deuteronomy 32:11-12; Psalm 91:4). In Isaiah 49:13-16, God is encouraging Israel that, even though they have suffered many hardships and will yet suffer many more hardships, God has not forsaken them and never will. He has not forgotten them and never will. See Psalm 89:19-37; Isaiah 44:21-23; Jeremiah 33:19-26; Romans 11:1-36.

A Nursing Mother – Isaiah 49:15

What do we see in the love of a nursing mother that could be compared unto God? A nursing mother is keenly sensitive to the needs of her newborn. Her mind, heart and physical body keep her attentive to the well-being and feeding times of her child. In I Kings 3:16-28, Solomon settled a dispute between two mothers who were contending for one baby. Solomon commanded the baby to be cut in two, with a sword, and each be given half. The imposter agreed to the terms, but the true mother immediately cried out to give the child to the other woman, rather than allow it to die. Scripture declares that she yearned (was deeply moved) for her son (I Kings 3:26).

Consider the diligence of a mother. With mind, heart, and soul, she works with her hands. See Proverbs 31:10-27. In the New Testament the Greek word for divine love is, "*Agape*," meaning "*sacrificial love*."

A Nurturing God – Isaiah 49:15

Most mothers would never forsake or forget their child. There might be some mothers who do (II Timothy 3:3 – "*without natural affection*" refers to parental love). Scripture abounds with passages that teach us of God's loyal & faithful love (Jeremiah 29:11; 31:3; Lamentations 3:22-23; Romans 8:35-39). As with the woman in Proverbs 31, let's focus on the nurturing hands of God. See Psalm 18:35; 31:15; 60:5; 138:7; 145:16; Isaiah 41:10.

A Nail-Scarred Pair of Hands – Isaiah 49:16

This is not a direct reference to Christ's crucifixion, but it will not be hard to make the application. First, it is to be noted that when God ordained the ministry of the high priest, he designated that the priest would wear a gem stone on each shoulder, engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel. Whatever the priest was doing, wherever the priest was going, he bore the names of Israel as he went about his priestly duties (Exodus 28:6-12). Jehovah has not engraved Zion on a stone. He has engraved it on His very hands. He bears the remembrance of His people in His very being.

Consider Christ

Actually, Christ is the initial subject in this chapter (Isaiah 49:1-6 – Christ is referred to as "*Israel*" – fulfilling the will of the Father on their behalf, as well as reaching out to the Gentiles. See note below). Christ, of course would receive marks on His hands for us – marks that were ordained before the foundation of the world (John 20:26-28 cp. I Peter 1:18-20). The Son of God works "hand-in-hand" with the Father in our salvation. We are kept by their mutual commitment to us. See John 10:27-30. We need to identify with these marks also (Galatians 6:14-17; Philippians 1:20-21; 3:10 cp. II Corinthians 4:6-18).

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One of the many wonderful themes of Christ, **the Messiah**, found in the book of Isaiah, is that He is **God's Servant**. Isaiah has **four "Servant Songs."** See Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:1-11; 52:13 – 53:11.

As we behold Christ as God's Servant, we should see ourselves, conforming to His image, as servants also. Matthew 11:28-30; John 20:21; Romans 8:29; Galatians 2:20; II Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:23-24; I Corinthians 15:58.