
Day 183 - July 2

The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

Isaiah Prophecies against Nations

Readings: *Isaiah 21:11-12; 34:5-17; 21:13-17; 23:1-18; I Kings 16:7-20; 18:3-7; 2 Chronicles 28:22-29:2*

Reflections:

- The judgments continue as Isaiah spells out prophecies against Edom, Arabia and Tyre. In his prophecy against Edom we see a fascinating correlation. As judgment falls on Edom and animals overrun and take control of the land, there is a restoration of the created order. The removal of the proud and destructive humans brings peace and harmony to the rest of creation. This connection between human sin and the suffering of creation stretches right back to the Garden of Eden and continues into the future all the way to the present. Judgment not only sets right the injustice against humans but it also facilitates the restoration of creation.
- At the end of this prophecy we also read: “For it is his mouth that has given the order, and his Spirit will gather them together. He allots their portions; his hand distributes them by measure. They will possess it forever and dwell there from generation to generation.” Here we see how God takes responsibility for how creation is ordered. The beauty and order and even locations of animals and people are all guided by the will and purposes of God.
- It is interesting that the prophecy of Tyre ends with a quote from the song of the prostitute. The song suggests how prostitutes in the normal course of time are completely forgotten. This song is a sad song about how a prostitute tries to sing a song so that she will somehow be remembered. She has no family line or inheritance to pass along to her children. Tyre is compared to a prostitute and is warned that all of her work to take money from the nations will ultimately be given over to God. Again a reminder of the emptiness and pointlessness of living such a life. Abandoning yourself to God may seem costly but in the end it bears incredible fruit. These nations are being warned with many different images to help them understand their dangerous position before God.
- The historical narrative at this point in the story allows us to see the corruption of Ahaz. He as king consistently turns to his own attempts to save himself rather than turning to God for help. He uses the assets he has to attempt to buy Assyria’s aid. As he strips

down those gold and articles of the temple to give to Assyria, the reader can't help but be shocked at how much he completely and utterly disregards God and cares nothing of those people who have been devoted to God. He then builds a replica of a Syrian altar and goes all out to make that the centre of worship. Again, his hope is to gain the attention and support of the King of Assyria. Ahaz serves as a great example of a heart that is looking to the wrong person for help. It is like a young man doing everything he can to win the affection of a young woman rather than turning to God to find his acceptance and identity in God. The young man chases after the woman, spending every dollar he has, hoping she will notice him. But in the end he is left with nothing. If he would have turned to God, God would have given him all of the love and affirmation he needed to go through life with confidence. God would have met his needs so that he could have used the blessings God had given him to serve God and other people. Similarly, Ahaz spends everything but is left with nothing. In the end he is not even given the honor of a king's burial.

- Key verse: "In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord." Difficulty and suffering has a way of revealing our hearts. It is easy to be kind and generous (or at least appear kind and generous) when you have an easy, luxurious and prosperous life. It is when a person is broken, in pain and struggling to survive when we discover what is within her or his heart.
- With the birth and rise of Azah's son, Hezekiah, the pendulum will once again swing in the opposite direction. Hezekiah will seek God and seek to restore the people of Israel to a faithful relationship with God. He stood against the religion and idolatry within the nation and called the people back to God.
- Key passage: "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook."