
Day 199 - July 18

Judah after Israel's Fall (725-585 BCE)

Isaiah's Prophecies about Restoration and the Messiah

Readings: *Isaiah 54:4-17; 55:1-13; 56:1-12*

Reflections:

- Isaiah 54:4 and following opens up for us God's incredible heart as a loving and compassionate husband for his people. He declares through Isaiah that "'with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,' says the Lord your Redeemer." He announces here how he will make a new covenant, as in the days of Noah. This is important in two very significant ways. First, Noah's covenant was with the entire world, even with creation itself. This new covenant is a covenant that will encompass everyone and everything. It is a covenant of total salvation. Second, it was a promise that God made with himself. Noah's covenant is not with another human like Abraham or with a nation like Israel. It was a covenant that God made with himself. This new covenant will be transacted without our involvement. It will be God completing his salvation from start to finish. "'Though the mountains be shaken and the hills removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace removed,' says the Lord who has compassion on you."
- The promises of salvation are wonderful:
 - A beautiful and ornate city. In Israel, it was the temple where God lived that was supposed to be this beautiful. In the new kingdom, it is our community where we live that is to be beautified and made glorious. It will be the new Jerusalem that John will write about in Revelations 21:9-14.
 - The generations, sons and daughters, will be taught by the Lord and their peace will be great! "You will have nothing to fear.... Whoever attacks you will surrender to you." God will arm this community with spiritual weapons that no enemy can stand against.
 - The Messiah, the coming king will usher in this new kingdom: "See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because the Lord your God...for he has endowed you with splendor." Here we see the Lordship of Christ married with God's vision for all nations to be part of his

new community. This new community is one that God will make beautiful and glorious through his grace.

- Isaiah 55:6-13 calls the listener to come seek the Lord with all their hearts as they look forward to this coming day. God is looking not for blind obedience to rules but for relationship and intimacy with us. As we seek him though, we must realize that his thoughts are not our thoughts. His way is a higher way. And when he speaks, his word is powerful to change everything! “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” We can completely trust God when he speaks because he as all powerful God never lies. Whatever he declares will happen. He wants us to trust his word more deeply and profoundly than anything else in our world. Only complete trust in what God says reveals that we truly know God and understand his heart. If we don’t trust what he says, it shows that there is still more about him we need to discover.
- Seeking and trusting God is backed up with an awesome promise for his people: “You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord’s renown, for an everlasting sign which will not be destroyed.” What an incredible promise!
- Isaiah 56 calls his people to recommit to radical justice and mercy in their relationships. Salvation from God is not about being self-indulgent. God’s blessing is meant to translate into radical generosity with those in need. This new community of God is an inclusive community for both foreigners and eunuchs. Those who were outside of normal community within Israel will now be fully welcomed in. Eunuchs will be given something better than sons and daughters as they are blessed within this new vision God will bring about.
- “...I...will ...give them joy in my house of prayer. ...for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations... ‘I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.” Jesus will declare this passage when he confronts the temple establishment of his day. His purge of the temple will initiate the ultimate showdown between him and the religious leaders. He declares “For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations but you have made it a den of revolutionaries.” The religious leaders were declaring that nations were their enemies when God wanted Israel to be a community of salvation for the nations. Isaiah 56:9-12 are fitting words of condemnation for all religious leaders who reject God’s encompassing grace and mercy and choose instead to live exclusive, self-righteous and self-indulgent lives. Praise God that through Jesus, a new community would be formed that would bring God’s grace and salvation to the nations of the world.