
Day 201 - July 20

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

Isaiah's Prophecies about Restoration and the Messiah

Readings: *Isaiah 60:1-22; 61:1-11; 62:1-12; 63:1-19; 64:1-12*

Reflections:

- Isaiah 60 restates again God's vision of restoration for his people: Nations will be blessed by the light of God's people, joy, radiance, wealth, peace and the restoration of God's temple as a meeting place between God and all the nations. One of the interesting passages is the replacement of the common with things more valuable. "Instead of bronze I will bring you gold, and silver in place of iron. Instead of wood I will bring you bronze, and iron in place of stones." It as if God is saying everything will be upgraded. This complete improvement would make one think that God was going to make Israel very wealthy and prosperous in the new order. In fact, what we see is that the upgrade is moving from the physical and temporal (tribe, torah, territory, temple) to the spiritual and eternal (new inclusive community, law of love, trans-territorial spiritual kingdom, and a temple made up of people with everyone being priests to the world).
- "I will make peace your governor and righteousness your ruler." Again we see that peace is an integral part of the new order as well as righteousness (and justice) for all people.
- "I am the Lord; in its time, I will do it swiftly." Israel had to wait and wait and wait (for hundreds of years) before God would act. But when he acted, he did it within three years. God loves to line everything up and then do it all quickly and with precision. During the waiting period, especially during silence (Israel had 400 years of silence. That is ten generations) we either live by faith in what God has said or we don't live at all. What we can take comfort in is that God's purposes will be done and when he acts it will be done swiftly!
- Isaiah 61 opens with the mission statement of Jesus. This was his personal mission statement for his life. "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor..." Notice in this mission statement that it is the power of the Spirit that enables the coming Messiah to complete his

mission. Jesus only did what we as humans can do through the Spirit. He did everything through the power of the Spirit. The empowerment (anointing) is for a number of key tasks: 1) proclaiming the good news of truth and love; 2) healing up people with broken hearts, 3) helping people be set free from bondage (addictions, poverty, anger – things that enslave), and 4) helping people experience God's favor and delight. This same mission statement through Jesus has been given to all of his followers. We know we are on track with his mission if these things are actually happening within our community.

- This inside out transformation of the Spirit is also meant to bring emotional health and healing: gladness replaces mourning; praise replaces a spirit of despair. In the New Testament we will see that one of the key characteristics of Christ-followers is joy!
- "They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." What an image of beauty and strength!
- "They will *rebuild* the ancient ruins and *restore* the places long devastated; they will *renew* the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations." A great vision for urban ministry!
- "And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God." In God's new community, every one of his children will be priests. No longer will people go through a priesthood to relate to God. Everyone will relate to him directly. Yet, for those in relationship with God, then they will be used by God like a nation of priests to the whole world. Peter will describe Christ-followers as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)
- "For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity." Again we see how important those who are oppressed are to God.
- "The Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations." How shocking this would be for a people who were obsessed with their own "special status" before God?
- "You will be called by a new name..." This new name represents a new fundamental identity before God. What names does God bestow in his children? "Hephzibah" which means "my delight is in her" and "Beulah" which means "married". In other words, God's new name for his people through Christ is for his bride, for people God is redeeming and making into a beautiful bride for himself. "...so will your God rejoice over you." In other words, God is crazily in love with us and is so excited about us he can barely stand it!
- In Isaiah 62 to 64 we see God's promised restoration continue to be affirmed as well as a reaffirmation of everything that God had done in the past to save his people. In this section we see God affirmed as "father" for the nation and how he has loved, protected and disciplined them. As with many other times, this section reminds us of the

importance of reminding ourselves of God's acts and words from the past. We must not allow our present circumstances to overshadow the truth of what God has shown us in the past.

- Isaiah 64 ends with this fabulous image: "we are the clay, you are the potter, we are all the work of your hand." May we never forget that God is faithfully working through our lives to shape and mold us into people who are truly made in his image! Sometimes the clay needs a lot of working but in the end, he makes masterpieces of our lives as we submit to his will and heart.