
Day 196 - July 15

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

Isaiah's Prophecies about Restoration and the Messiah

Readings: *Isaiah 45:14-25; 46:1-13; 47:1-15; 48:1-15*

Reflections:

- Isaiah 45:14 prophecies that the great enemy of Israel, Egypt will one day be taken hostage by God. History will prove that many from this nation will become Christ-followers, bondservants of Christ.
- The rest of Isaiah 45 and 46 will compare the relational nature of God compared to the mute and dumb idols the people have worshipped. God will hide himself for a time ("Truly you are a God who hides himself") but he does call his people to seek him and as they do, they will find him. "I have not said to Jacob's descendents, 'seek me in vain.' I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right." God shares how he is like a mother who carries a child in her womb, gives birth, raises the child and then takes care of them even into old age. "I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you." God's deep love for his people means that he will be true to his promises and will ultimately deliver his people. The idols on the other hand offer them no hope whatsoever. "Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his troubles.... I say: My purpose will stand and I will do all that I please.... What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.... I will grant salvation to Zion."
- In Isaiah 47 we see a prophecy against Babylon that seems to carry with it some striking parallels to another ancient enemy, Satan. "Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, 'I am and there is none besides me.'" This is a clear reference to thinking yourself a god. "You have trusted in your wickedness... Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you...." These are clear traits of Satan. "A catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you." Again, without doubt the cross of Jesus caught Satan completely off guard and brought the crushing blow that God had prophesied in Genesis 3.
- In Isaiah 48 we see God return to his emphasis on the new things he will do. "From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you." Israel was called to be a light to the nations but they continually failed to complete their calling before God.

Yet, God will not be proved a liar or a failure. He declares in this passage that he will do exactly what he said. This new work will complete what he has consistently promised. As the creator and sustainer of all things, God is able to do anything he wants. God will deliver Israel from their enemies, in this case the Babylonians, and will complete his will for their lives. This coming Messiah will be the instrument through whom God completes his purposes. "I will bring him and he will succeed in his mission." We will see in the life of Jesus that he clearly carried this kind of intentional focus on completing the will of God.

- These sections of Isaiah remind us of a number of important truths. First, God is a person. He is not a machine or a mindless force that governs the universe. He is a person who communicates and desires loving relationship. He does hide himself at times to help awaken our need of him. He wants to be pursued even as he most of the time is the pursuer. Second, the things we often place our hope in are ultimately a waste of time. Our idols - positions of power or accumulation of wealth or achievement of status - none of these really can deliver what we ultimately need. Only God can satisfy the longings of our hearts. Last of all, God's mission will be completed. It will catch us all off guard and his enemies will be blindsided. God will most likely announce it ahead of time but that will make no difference. His ways are not our ways and his power and wisdom knows no limits. This should give us confidence to simply abandon ourselves to God in trust that his purposes will be done through his son, Jesus Christ!