

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

### *Isaiah's Prophecies about Restoration and the Messiah*

Readings: *Isaiah 51:1-23, 52:1-15; 53:1-12; 54:1-3*

#### **Reflections:**

- Isaiah 51 highlights the themes we have witnessed over and over in Isaiah's preaching.
  - God is firmly committed to his people. "The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins." "I, even I, am he who comforts you."
  - God will work a miraculous salvation that will transform his people. "He will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord." "My salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail." "The cowering prisoners will soon be set free."
  - Joy will come upon those who are saved. "Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing." "Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."
- The chapter ends with a vivid picture of the nation under judgment before Isaiah 52 opens up a wonderful picture of restoration. The destruction that God's people have suffered is replaced with beautiful new robes and complete freedom from the chains that imprisoned.
- Key verse: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" This amazing passage will find its most full expression when the first Christ-followers travel across the known world announcing their new King and his kingdom of peace and grace.
- Another key verse for those leaving their state of slavery: "Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the Lord. But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard." This is a powerful image of deliverance that drives home two important points. As we follow God into our

healing and freedom, we are to remain completely focused on him and being close to him (portrayed in the image of carrying the arc of the covenant). This passage is warning us against the sin of Israel's forefathers when they tried to steal some of their enemies' things for their own enjoyment (e.g. idols, possessions, etc.) When God frees us from the bondages in our lives, he alone is our treasure. We don't need to bring anything unhealthy with us. Second, we see that our freedom is one that is given to us completely as a gift of grace. God goes before us and follows up behind us. We don't need to fight any battles but just stay close to him and he will do the rest. This is meant to help us rest in peace in our relationship with him and with the timing of how he works things out.

- Isaiah 52:13-54:3 is one of the most accurate prophetic passages in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. This passage is so rich that it really cannot be captured well in a few words. With this said, here is the quick run down. The Messiah according to this passage:
  - Will act with divine wisdom;
  - Will be exalted;
  - Will physically suffer incredible torture and will become appalling;
  - Will serve as a sacrifice for forgiveness "sprinkle many nations";
  - Through him the nations will encounter God's truth "what they have not heard, they will understand";
  - He will grow up in vulnerability "a tender shoot";
  - He will be a very average man "no beauty or majesty to attract us to him";
  - Despised and rejected by people;
  - Carries our sin and sicknesses;
  - Punished so that we might have peace;
  - By his wounds we receive healing;
  - Does not cry out when being abused and killed;
  - Assigned a grave with evil people though he was a man of peace and truth;
  - This is all God's will to make him a sacrifice for sin;
  - After his death, he will be saved – not clearly explained how this will happen but definitely affirmed it will happen;
  - Given a portion among the great and will secure incredible "spoils" to be divided with the strong;
  - Through him Israel's tent will stretch out to encompass the nations and their cities.

- As we read through this list, it is clear that Jesus is without doubt the one Isaiah spoke hundreds of years earlier. The parallels are incredible and reveal that God had a very clear plan to deal with the sin of the world by taking it on himself. The God of the universe became the suffering servant who saved us from our sin and sickness and to crush the serpents head with one final blow. What an awesome God we serve! May we never forget his power and love that enables him to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imaging!