Notes on Isaiah

Knowing God: Isaiah on Social Justice: “Why do you cry in the face of my poor?”

Mahar-Shalal-hash-baz (8:1) Shear-jashub (7:3)

Oracles against the Nation (Chapter 13-24)

We’re Going Home

Behold My Servant

Who maybe my servant?

Distress and Trial

“Oh, that Thou would rend the heavens”

1. A kind of anthology –
2. Ch. 1-39 -- larger the voice of the prophet Isaiah
3. Other voices seem to come from hundreds of years later
4. With Ch. 40 – the text changes; quite another time and kingdom in the background; quite a different style and major themes; but quite different focus
5. Ch. 56 and on – now the huge joy that was part of Chs. 40-54 changes to more somber
6. Arguably a book with multiple traditions; collects a series of voices who say they are in the tradition of Isaiah
7. Textually the book has been very stable; among the Dead Sea Scrolls – an entire scroll of Isaiah; virtually textually identical with the Hebrew text in the present
8. Superscription: 740-687 BCE; later than Amos, but sharing concerns with Amos
9. Ch. 40 – 54: 539-538 BCE
10. Ch. 55 on: 530 BCE

VI: Knowing God: Isaiah on Social Justice – Israel in the North (10 tribes); Assyria in 721 BCE, captured Samaria (capital of Israel); Assyrians would capture people from the 10 tribes and through intermarriage with Assyrians – 10 tribes lost their identity

1. People saying, we “know” God, but they don’t do social justice (like Amos 8:11)
2. Connections to the personal name of God; when you know the name, you can ask/expect/demand; holy name of God never spoken except by the High Priest once on a year on the day of atonement
3. In Is. 1:2 “…for the Lord has spoken” – using the personal name of God – why is this God allowing the conquering of the people (as in Amos 5:21-27)
4. The Northern Kingdom falls; Isaiah speaks to the South – Is. 1: 2 – the prophet says “hear” what the God has spoken
5. Is:1:3 – “but Israel does not know, does not understand (reference to Genesis to the “knowledge of good and evil”; the idea of not knowing; first human lies – Cain doesn’t “know” where his brother is); alienation from God comes from not “knowing” Is. 1:4ff “the nation is sick…”
6. Religious hypocrisy: Is. 1: 13-17; 3:14; Is:5 – the vineyard “song”
7. Images of wealth: 2 story houses; using cedar – imported from the coast;

VII. Mahar-Shalal-hash-baz (8:1) = “the spoil speeds, the prey hastens”; Shear-jashub (7:3)=”a remnant shall return” – some connection to Hosea and marrying Gomer/relationships that are built on infidelity; children of the prophet Isaiah;

1. A remnant shall return
2. Is. 7:10-17: “a young woman shall conceive” (in Christian Foundational Writings – took this line to be referencing Mary who will give birth to Jesus)
3. Is. 11 – messianic

VIII. We’re Going Home: beginning at Ch.40; Cyrus, the Persian overthrows Babylonian powers; says people can go home to Jerusalem and can rebuilt the temple

1. Cyrus (a non-Jew) is called “God’s anointed”
2. Cyrus, the instrument of the God to help the remnant
3. Servant Songs—Israel/Judah is God’s suffering servant on behalf of the coming of God to all people; “we were suffering on behalf of the nations” – so the knowledge of God could come to all the nations: Ch 42:1ff; Ch 49: 1-6; Ch 50: 4-11; Ch 52:13-53:12

IX: Who maybe my servant?: who can be a servant of the God? Who can be among the people of the God? Is. 56:3ff;

X: No one prior to Jesus who fulfilled the role of messiah by the path of suffering; this is why the Servant Songs of Isaiah are read as messianic

XI: Distress and Trial/ “Oh, that Thou would rend the heavens” 56:10; 59:9; -- people failed again

XII: Ch 66 – The new vision