



Small Group Questions Sunday 20/03/22

Series: Rebuilding Hope: Isaiah 40-66: Sermon: Isaiah 61

Read Isaiah 61 and Luke 4:14-21

Background (read Ezra 1)

Before being exiled, Judah was a vassal state under the Babylonian Empire. This meant that they could go on living in their land and worshipping their God, as long as they paid their dues and lived peaceably. However, they attempted to become allies with Egypt, and therefore Babylon completely destroyed their city, killed citizens, removed all their infrastructure (palace and temple), took their kings, priests, prophets, and officials into captivity, and infilled the land with their own people. All that remained in the land were the land workers and labourers.

Now, 70 years have passed since the deportation into Babylon. Persia has become the next 'super empire' and they have overthrown Babylon. King Cyrus of Persia has allowed all exiles to return home and rebuild their cities. We can read about this in Ezra 1 (notice the whole realm still belongs to King Cyrus).



For anyone interested, this is a photo of the Cyrus Cylinder, (currently exhibited in the British Museum) which has inscribed on it a Babylonian account of the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539BC, of his restoration to various temples, of statues removed, and of his own work at Babylon

So, you can imagine, those who returned to the land were either 70 years older or born into captivity. They are traumatized from the last 70 years in captivity, and when they return to the holy city of Zion, it is unrecognizable.

1. Isaiah is speaking to the people of Israel – those who grieve in Zion.

- How are Israel described? (Read 61:1-2)
- What has Isaiah been anointed to do? (Read 61:1-2)
- How does God promise to transform them? (Read 61:3-9)
- Who are Israel called to be among the nations? (whole passage)

2. "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Turn to Luke 4:14-21

- Who are the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed? In other words, who are the ones in exile?

The people of Israel were called to re-build the kingdom of Judah and be priests among the nations.

We are called to build the kingdom of heaven and be priests among the nations.

- Can you think of any other ways the gospels speak about ‘opening eyes’ ‘revealing’ ‘giving light’ ‘showing the way’?

1 Corinthians 13 says:

For now, we see through a glass, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

Look at all these verses which speak of Kingdom Building

https://www.openbible.info/topics/kingdom_building

DISCUSS

- What are the signs of the Kingdom?
- How aware of the Kingdom of heaven are you in your every-day living?
- How can we become more aware of the spiritual reality that we live in?
- We are citizens of heaven: does this give us a different perspective in tough times?

Even in world turned upside down... even in the midst of despair, anxiety and grief, war and pandemic, we are purposed to be God’s royal priesthood... God’s image-bearers to the world – people of joy, of praise, of righteousness, of beauty and of comfort.

PRAY

Spend some time in prayer....