Video: “Isaiah by Ralph Williams”

BRIEF

* Hearing voices in the text: beauty of Isaiah
  + Ex) reading a letter that’s typed but knowing who it is from; “How do you know it’s your dad?” You know the person and what they would say
  + As you read the Bible a while you get to know those voices
  + The book of proh. Isaiah is for those who will learn to listen to it; understood as an anthology
  + First section of it (Chapter 1-39) understood as the prophet Isaiah’s voice, but some bits seem to come from hundreds of years later, and the kings… the Bible was put together that way
  + Chapter 40 written 200 years later; another kingdom in the background
  + Mixture of poetry and prose; major themes
  + Another shift around Chapter 56
  + Chapters 40-55: doubt, criticism, bitterness, sense of failure—intermingled with pride, triumph
  + Book comes to an end with that voice calling out to God “to rend the heavens”
* Pseudepigrapha: writings which are given under the name of someone else
  + It was a practice of the ancient world
  + Later people who came and decided to extend the work of that figure if they were inspired by them, who started the tradition
  + It isn’t a dishonest attempt- they wanted to acknowledge the tradition of Isaiah and used his voice as an extension into their time
  + Not plagiarism- which is claiming someone else’s voice as their own

RUBRICS

1. KNOWING GOD; ISAIAH ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

“Why do you grind the face of my poor?” Isaiah 3:15

1. MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ; SHEYASHBUH
2. ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS
3. WE’RE GOING HOME
4. BEHOLD MY SERVANT
5. WHO MAY BE MY SERVANT?
6. DISTRESS AND TRIUMPH
7. ALL THAT WOULD REND THE HEAVENS
8. KNOWING GOD; ISAIAH ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

* Prophesying in the south of Judea, Jerusalem; Early difficulties up north-- the whole kingdom, but up north specifically (Israel)
* Assyria will capture northern capital of Samaria, and disperse the 10 tribes
  + conquering people would import some of their own, export natives; spread them abroad so that they would be scattered, resistance would be lowered, and their identity lost
  + Phrase: “The 10 lost tribes of Israel” derives from that experience
* Why did God allow the northern kingdom to be taken?
  + They weren’t worshipping God rightly: there were cults, infidelity, wrong-worship of God
  + Amos 8:11, Amos is angry at social injustice, he tells them they are not serving God justly
* The God did not make himself known to them
  + The name was not known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Genesis: ALE SHADAI
  + “When they ask my name, tell them I AM”
  + The author is trying to say that at that moment when the God brought the people to him and bonded them together as a free people, he entrusted them with his personal name
    - The God gives His personal name-- when you have the personal name then you can bless that person but also curse them
    - The risk that the God is taking in giving his personal name; moment of intimacy
    - Example: When in love, you give your partner a personal name, just for them. If they give it to someone else it’s a sense of betrayal.
* “LORD”: in Judaism believed/tradition was that the name was too holy for humans to say. When they wrote it, they could not pronounce it. If you wrote it, could not erase it (like rubbing out God).
  + Only the high priests once a year on the Day of Atonement was allowed to pronounce the holy name.
  + Even when the text was read in gathering the word was substituted with Adonai
    - Adonai: small lord
  + Deuteronomy 6: Love the Lord Your God
    - “the SHEMA”
    - That “Lord” is the holy name of the God of Israel
  + Outside of liturgy was even too holy to say: HASHEL, ADOSHEM
* Isaiah 1:3 “Israel does not know, my people do not understand”
  + Relationship with God
  + Genesis: knowledge of good and evil; noble creatures wanted to know things; jealous God punished them for it
    - In fact it is: the fruit of the tree of knowledge of evil; Adam and Eve knew things/quite a lot; after they eat, the God comes to human and says “Where are you? Who told you that you were naked?”
      * The first sign of disloyalty is alienation; They became aware of their own bodies as a sight of shame; they know their bodies already, but now in a different way; the male/female relationship changes, Adam blames Eve, He blames God; alienated from the creatures, blames the serpent.
  + “Where is your brother?” “Am I my brother’s keeper?”
    - The first human lie; We don’t know what we do know; to know yourself as in relation to someone else
  + “My people do not know” they need to understand they’re alienated from God
* Isaiah 1:13, “Bring your worthless offerings no more; your incense is detestable to Me… I cannot endure iniquity in a solemn assembly.”
  + Hypocrisy- has a nasty smell
  + That’s what the God is upset about, “cannot endure inequity in solemn assembly”
* Isaiah 1:16-17, wash yourself clean, cease to do evil, learn to do good, depend the fatherless, plead for the widow
* Isaiah 3:13-15, God is angry “It is you who have devoured the vineyard”
* Isaiah 5: Song of the vineyard, “The house of Israel is my vineyard”
  + 5:8-30
    - Ripping off poor people
    - Use architecture and houses as reference point
    - “They slept on thick layers of cloak which they have as collateral from the poor” while the poor are cold, with nothing
* Profound anger the God is expressing
* 3: 15 “What do you mean by crushing my people? By grinding the face of the poor?”
  + Humans are said to be made in the image of God; this is the horror of it
    - “Watching what they’re doing, what ones doing therefore is grinding the image of God with one heel in the earth”

1. MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ (mahal shal al hasba); SHEYASHBUH

* Motif that continues in the New Testament: the prophet is understood as participating in his own life in the pathos of the relationship between God and Israel

Ex) Prophet Hosea: go marry a whore, has kids by her, she goes back to being a whore, God says take her back, he does and loves her, has more kids, she goes back to being a whore, God says take her back… Then God says, “Now you know how I feel”

Side note: The language at the time was very violent, part of the general masculinity of the text

* Isaiah is said to have 2 children : Maher-shalal-hash-baz (God controls the destiny of all nations), Sheayashu (a remnant will return; God will never cast off his people forever, the promise)
  + A remnant will return, not everybody—ex) Noah
  + God will punish but a remnant will return and go on

1. ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS

* Chapter 5:13, people going into exile for knowledge- means they don’t know him
* + Chapter 7:14, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”
  + Luminous passages
  + In English speaking tradition, word “young woman” has been translated “virgin”
    - The God who knows and can give signs, “I’m going to give you a sign myself. Behold, here is the sign.”
    - Young woman- OMMA- says nothing about sexual status of young woman.
      * OMMA: Virgin, or married woman with a child, simply a young woman
      * Translated into Greek, PARTHANOS
        + Same root, doesn’t always mean virgin but normally does. Why was it translated that way? As a compliment to the royal bride, she was a virgin.
  + Jesus was born in unusual circumstances, miraculous birth; Looking at Isaiah, they come across this passage- (they read in in Greek translation)
    - Jesus was virgin born and there is a prophecy of him
      * At looking at Fulfillment of prophecy: what else could it be? Obvious
      * Those who didn’t believe in him: read far into it and looked at translation, OMMA, and said sexual status has nothing to do with it; They re-did translations to make them more accurate to Hebrew translation.
  + Jerome: translated to only mean virgin
  + King James: translated to English, to virgin
    - Tradition got going
  + German translation, a Luther translated to “a young woman”
  + Scattered versions of promise and signs to be given
* Chapter 7:11 “Ask the Lord your God for a sign…”
* Chapter 11: 9, Promise “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”
  + Seemed as though history disconfirmed prophecy; religious belief

1. WE’RE GOING HOME

* Chapter 40: Going Home
  + People in exile had a choice; thoughts things a new; came to conclusion that there is only one God
  + Punish the people for lack of social justice; remembered that a remnant shall return
    - Cyrus- the Persian who overthrew the Babylonian power and made a decree that the Jews could go home and later on rebuild their temple
* Chapter 45:1
  + Cyrus isn’t even a Jew, he’s Persian, and yet he is called God’s Messiah
    - God uses him, an outsider to bring his people home

1. BEHOLD MY SERVANT & 6. WHO MAY BE MY SERVANT?

* Servant songs: Israel, Judea as God’s suffering servant, on behalf of the knowledge of God coming to all people
  + We were punished for what we did but there is a surplus of suffering
    - We were suffering on behalf of all the nations; parts of privilege of God’s chosen people is that we were chosen to suffer so that knowledge of God would come to all the nations
* Chapter 49:1-6, The Servant of the Lord
* Chapter 50: 4-11, Israel’s Sin and the Servant’s Obedience
* Chapter 52:13, The Suffering and Glory of the Servant
* Chapter 53:12
  + Soaring language, covenant to the people, new things declared, “we are healed”
  + New vision of what it is to serve God- suffering may be on behalf of others; Are you willing to bear it? Like the figure of Moses participates in that
* Chapter 56: last part of 2nd half
  + There’s a vision, 56:3, “Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say…”
    - Foreigners can come; ever-lasting name; The house shall be called house of prayer for all people
* Among all the talks of Messiahs in Judaism, before the people of Jesus, there was no notion of a Messiah who fulfilled his Messiahship (role) by suffering and dying.
  + First Commandment: LOVE
  + Deuteronomy 6: LOVE
  + Leviticus 19: LOVE

1. DISTRESS AND TRIUMPH & 8. ALL THAT WOULD REND THE HEAVENS

- Bickering, honesty, hypocrisy

- Language of huge distress

Isaiah 59 Sin, Confession and Redemption

* + - Isaiah 59:9, “So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows.”
* Plea to God “that you would rend the heavens”
  + Visions that God will make it alright
    - Isaiah 65: 25, “The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain”
    - All nations will come to worship God and join in justice