



Biblical Literacy

Scripture • Substance • Spiritual Passion

Lesson 57.1

Old Testament Survey: Returning from Exile (part 1)

Outline for Class

- Welcome
- Theme Today
As we consider the further captivity and begin studying the return from exile, we have a chance to look at things from two perspectives: from secular eyes as well as eyes of faith. The challenge of faith is to see behind the secular with a glimpse into the divine. The difficulty with educated 21st century humanity is the understanding that both in and beyond the quarks of existence lies the reality of the divine.
- Prayer for Endurance & Insight
- Video (38 minutes)
- Discussion & Points for Home

Points for Home

- ❖ “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly...” (Isa. 40:1). Judah had been through unimaginable trauma. It was not because God was merciless, it was because God had made a promise and was going to fulfill it. Through those fires of pain, came the purity needed for his people to continue forth. Once the people had reached a point where they could hear and see the voice and hand of God, he placed it before them, seeking to comfort and console them ever so tenderly. God has and will do whatever is necessary to get the attention of his children. His goal is nothing short of bringing his plans to completion, including his plan to mold us into the image of his Son. If that requires pain, then he will allow pain, even as his heart is tender. It is all set to work for good for those who love him and are called according to his good purpose (Rom 8:28f).
- ❖ “Bel bows down; Nebo stoops; their idols are on beasts and livestock” (Isa. 46:1). I do not know anyone who has a gold Bel Marduk they cart around when helpful. We would scoff at such a person. These were material gods bound up in and by nature. Still, we cannot say that means we have no idols we turn to today! If we define an idol as something that we allow to take a greater position of authority in our life than YHWH God, then I fear many of us have a number of idols. The assurance of Scripture is that these idols are worthless and more. We say more because they lead us away from seeking the true God, and as such, cause us damage. With prayer, I am going to examine my life. I want to locate the things (or people) that I rely on in place of God. I want to bring everything in subjection to Him who reigns on high. I want to have one God not only in theology and belief, but also in practice.
- ❖ “He bore the sins of many ” (Isa. 53:12). What a profound prophecy. This word reached through the centuries to Calvary and the cross of Christ. In Christ we have the miracle of the incarnation. The God who is Spirit, who is Creator of matter, entered into the material world as a material, DNA carrying, atomic and sub-atomic particle-based being. The 21st century understanding of the building blocks of nature sends shockwaves of significance in the words of Paul to the Philippians (see Phil 2:6-11). The New Testament sermon, which is the book of Hebrews, spoke of the Old Testament prophets who “though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised” (Heb. 11:39). That promise was of Christ, “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.” It is Christ who, “after making purification for sins,” “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3). This is the assurance of our faith, of our salvation, and of the promise. This gives meaning to today and purpose to life. This is the assurance that would lead martyrs to a willing death, even as it inspires saints to live a godly life. In this faith I stand, with gratitude to the Holy One.

www.Biblical-literacy.org

© Copyright 2010 by W. Mark Lanier. Permission hereby granted to reprint this document in its entirety without change, with reference given, and not for financial profit.