

7. Knowing God - Light of the Nations (Ch. 49)

Introduction

The majority of Christians in the UK are 'Gentile' followers of Jesus, rather than Jewish ones - like much of the early church. We tend to take for granted that Christ came for all people, because of New Testament writings. It is often hard for us to grasp how controversial that was for the early church, and how controversial it would have been for 8th century Israelites. This study looks at some of those questions in a prophecy that shows God's concern for all the nations on earth.

To start with (5 min):

- Of all the places/ nations you have visited, what was your favourite - why?

Read Isaiah 49. 1-4.

1. Who do you think these verses are:
 - a. Addressed to?
 - b. Talking about? (*Isaiah? Nation of Israel? Jesus?*) Why do you think this?
 - c. In what ways do you imagine this:
Was controversial in the 8th century BC?
Is controversial today? Why?

Read Isaiah 49. 5-7.

2. What light do these verses cast on who is being discussed here & their task as God's servant?

Read Isaiah 49.5-7.

3. Compile a list of the promises God makes about what the 'day of salvation' will look like.
 - a. What characteristics of God are revealed in these promises?
 - b. How far would you say these promises have been fulfilled in your life to date? Pick one phrase that is particularly pertinent to you & explain why. (*This could be done in pairs/ small groups*)
4. God's people were struggling, under judgement and fearful when this prophecy was delivered. How easy do you find it to trust God when life is dark and problems are overwhelming? Has that trust changed over time? If so, why? What helped to bring about that change?

Finally read Isaiah 49. 14-23

5. What do you think modern Jews might understand these verses to mean? What might the consequences of that be? How far would you agree? Why?
6. If we understand them more generally as God's promises to his people (including us), Which bit do you find particularly encouraging at the moment? Why?
7. Choose one verse/ phrase from this prophecy that it would be helpful to memorise for those times when things are dark & uncertain.

Reflect and Pray - Suggestions

- Pray for those who feel they are in a dark place currently.
- Praise God for the promises he has fulfilled - in general and in your lives
- Pray for those nations where there is no witness to Jesus yet, or those where Christians suffer for trying to be 'a light in their nation'.