



Second Isaiah Divine Word

Interpreting the Text:

1. Isaiah 40 begins with a call for human help to implement God's plans for Israel's salvation, just as in Isaiah 6 God seeks agents to bring about divine judgment on Israel. In chapter 6 the prophet volunteers to be God's servant. Who are the servants addressed at the beginning of Isaiah 40?
2. Beginning in Isaiah 40, Second Isaiah places a particularly strong emphasis on the role that human agents play in doing God's work in the world. What would have been the significance of this for the author? How does this help frame the Assyrian conquerors, the Israelites in exile, and the prophets of God?

Applying the Text:

1. In Isaiah 40:3-5 God's return to Jerusalem is described in cosmic terms. The implication of this language is that God has not simply sent Israel into exile in Babylon but has actually gone with them and shared the experience with them. This suggests that God voluntarily suffers along with the people. How does the New Testament understand this idea, and how do the Gospel writers relate it to their understanding of Jesus?
2. In Isaiah 40:8 the writer affirms what may be the central theological truth of the whole book: God's word, once given, will inevitably be fulfilled, not just once, but over and over again. How did this belief help the early Church to understand Jesus and to understand its own role in the fulfillment of God's will. Do you think that this same belief can be applied in the contemporary church?