

Second Isaiah Agents of God's Redemption

Interpreting the Text:

1. In Second Isaiah membership in God's family implies that God will fulfill the obligation of redemption within the family. Does Second Isaiah also imply a similar obligation for members of the family toward each other? What evidence does the author give?
2. To the long list of human agents of the divine will that Isaiah mentions, the passages being considered in this section add the Persian king, Cyrus, who is given God's support and sole political control over Israel. What does the inclusion of Cyrus tell us about who can be an agent of God? How would this example have challenged the expectations of the Israelites?
3. Second Isaiah's frequent references to God's divine plan for world events suggests a belief in a kind of determinism in which all events in history have been planned from the beginning of creation. In Second Isaiah's context this view is intended to offer Israel reassurance that God's promises of restoration will inevitably take place. How would the author's emphasis on God's providence served as a source of comfort for the Israelites? How might it have been distressing?

Applying the Text:

1. In Isaiah 44:23, Second Isaiah speaks of the idea of God's family and grounds the idea of redemption in a family context. Israel has been part of God's family since its beginnings, and that relationship has not changed because of the exile. How do Christians fit into this picture? They too claim to be part of God's family and trace their own redemption to that fact. Yet, Second Isaiah implies that Israel's family status has not come to an end. How do all of these things fit together (for one New Testament view on this, see the comments of Paul in Romans 9-11)?
2. In Isaiah 45:6-7, Second Isaiah not only stresses an absolute belief in monotheism but also states clearly the implications of such a belief. If God is the only power in the cosmos, then God must be responsible for evil as well as for good. What are your reactions to Second Isaiah's conclusion? Are there alternatives to the prophet's position?

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