These ten chapters in Isaiah, Chapters 40-49, give the equivalent of the Saviour's resume to Israel. Isaiah outlines for his reader the attributes of Israel's Messiah, their Saviour. Speaking on behalf of Jehovah, Isaiah announces what will happen to the world and the wicked, how Israel is to be treated in the last days, and he outlines God's relationship to his chosen people. It is a masterpiece of writing.

The Saviour is Incomparable

In Isaiah 46:5 the Lord issues this challenge to Israel,

> 5 To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

He might well ask us this same question. In Isaiah 44:19 the Lord recaps a series of statements he makes to Israel to try to get them to understand that their idols are truly worthless to them. They have been deceived. He tells them that a man goes into the woods and cuts down a tree. With part of it he burns a fire to warm himself. With part of the tree he cooks some food to fill his belly. With part of the tree he shapes a god and bows down and worships it, but to what purpose?

> 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

He finishes his questions to Israel by saying, 'Shall I fall down, that is, worship, the trunk of a tree?' In the next verse he tells them they might as well eat the ashes they burned, for their hearts have been deceived and turned away, and that man's soul cannot be saved.

Our modern application of these verses include all the things in our society (Babylon) that are trying to turn our hearts aside from the one true God to worship those things made by man. When our hearts are caught up in our pursuit of entertainment, whether that is in the form of computer games, movies, boating and recreational activities, sporting events, or even civic service, we have replaced our God with a god of immensely inferior quality. There is only one God who can save, and that is Christ. Our god is whomever or whatever we focus our time and attention on. It is where our allegiance lies and that which holds our love and devotion. Sometimes our actual love for Christ pales in comparison to our true love for other things. This is what Christ is trying to get them to see.

We need to ask ourselves, are we willing to forsake all else to come to Christ? Many are willing to forsake Christ to pursue their jobs, lusts, pleasures, and hobbies. Are we willing to put them in their proper place as just temporary things of mortality, and instead, focus our time and attention on He who will take us into eternity?

The Qualities of Our God

If you have learned to appreciate figurative language, some of Isaiah's descriptions of what the God of Israel does for his people are quite remarkable and beautiful. Unlike the gods man makes for himself, Jehovah knows more than we do. No one needs to give him counsel or to instruct him. In other words, we can turn to him for knowledge (Isaiah 40:13-14). What good is a god who cannot hear us or help us when we need more than what man can give? Isaiah 41:17-18 tells us that he will listen to us when we are in trouble and bless us abundantly.

When we are spiritually lost he will show us the way back. He lights the path before us (Isaiah 42:16). When we sin and take those sins to him, he will blot them out and remember them no more. Who else can forgive us our sins and treat us like they never happened (Isaiah 43:25-26; 44:21-23)? In Isaiah 44:2-4 he paints a great picture. We are told that the Lord will pour out his Spirit on our families like water on dry ground.

Do you see that visual of the parched earth hungrily soaking up the water and looking refreshed? Think of a wilting plant and how it looks after it has been watered. This reviving influence is what the Spirit does for us.

Finally, he makes two more really good points about the Lord's relationship with his people. He tells us (Isaiah 46:3-4) that the Lord carries his people from birth to old age. Think about what that image entails, to carry or support someone from the time they are born until they die. That is a complete and total commitment to his people. That is life-long support and caring. He says that a mother will forget her nursing child before he will forget his people. If you know anything about what happens to a woman who is nursing a child if she doesn't feed him, you know that it can become exquisitely painful for the mother. But we are assured by the Lord that it is more likely that a nursing mother will forget to feed her baby than that he will forget his people, Israel. He even makes the comparison (Isaiah 49:14-16) that we are engraved on the palms of his hands.

This reference to being engraved on the palms of his hands, though I have never heard anyone else say this, reminds me that he really did engrave me in the palms of his hands when he had nails driven through his wrists for my sake. He literally does have permanent reminders of his people engraved in the palms of his hands.

Conclusion

There is much more to this lesson than what I have just covered, but this is the heart of the matter. Our God has a lot in store for us. He has created and shaped the universe and made this earth to help us have the best mortal experience we can for the lessons we need to learn. He fully understands that mortal lessons are hard and uncomfortable. Such trials are necessary for us to learn our most important character traits. But he is always here beside us. He never forgets us. He promises us that if we will cling to him and honor him as we ought, he will carry us through mortality and exalt us in the eternities. We just have to chose him before anything or anyone else as our God, the place where we focus our attention and our devotion.

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