

Isaiah 55:1-5 **Revelation 21:5-6**

I am tempted this morning to take words from Revelation 21:6 as the text for the day. “It is done.” Of course, I am referring to this spring semester of 2008. In just a short while we will pull down the shutters on this course of study. It will be, if not in the record books, on our transcripts.

But there is another reason I have come to this text. In the very valuable register of New Testament citations from Old Testament texts at the back of my Greek New Testament, Revelation 21:6 is connected with Isaiah 55:1 – our assigned text for today. The intertextual connection is in the promise that those who are thirsty will receive water to drink. In itself this is hardly startling, but an additional look at the contexts of these two texts makes this more interesting.

Isaiah 55:1-2 opens with a wonderful invitation to a banquet. The servants of the Lord are implored to come, buy, eat; they are to listen – pay attention. This wonderful meal to which they are summoned is no ordinary banquet. They are to leave no stone unturned to get there because what is offered is life (Isa 55:3a). In the context of Isaiah all this refers to the return to Judah. Those who went through the original exodus and wilderness experience longed for the land of milk and honey. But it did not ultimately fulfill. This time the promise of satisfaction remains.

Why? Because now God is about to make an everlasting covenant with his servants. And here is the real “shocker.” The promise of the blessings of the everlasting covenant with King David (Psalm 89) is going to be their own possession. Your status in the land will be raised so high, they are told, that nations which never gave you the time of day before will flock to you. Your status can well be described, as it is here, as attending a banquet of unlimited food.

But let us come back into my little excursion into the back of my Greek New Testament. It now becomes more interesting. For now as I return to the text in Revelation all sorts of things begin to jump out in front of me. Revelation 21:1-8 is really also about the fulfillment of this promise in Isaiah. Revelation talks about it in terms of the renovation of the creation. That is the real force of the statement, “It is done,” or, “It is finished.” John is picturing completion of the work of God’s reclamation of the creation. An integral part of the completion of this mission is God dwelling, or “tenting”, as in a great feast of Tabernacles, with all the people of his creation. Just as Isaiah says, without money or cost to the thirsty, God will give the water of life. Likewise this is echoed in Revelation. The tree of life that was lost in Eden now returns in Jesus, God’s wisdom, the bread and water of life for the nations.

What do these texts have to say to us today as we draw near to the end of the semester? The books of Isaiah and Revelation were written a long time ago. The exiles returned from Mesopotamia and the nations did not flock to Jerusalem. John did not live to see the actual creation renewed. We will have a short respite this summer and then most of us will start another semester. We still wait for that day of full restoration. But our texts remind us that sometime it will be the last semester. Sometime this work will be finished. Sometime God’s mission in renovating this old creation will be complete. And we will enter into that rest.

As we await that day may we be faithful and in good spirits. As we go forth from this place, may our moments in the time in-between be filled with confidence in the promises of God. And, above all, our wish today is that our studies in this place contribute to the strengthening of our confidence in the fulfillment of these promises.

Allan J. McNicol
Austin Graduate School of Theology
April 28, 2008