

Isaiah 40 - God's People Are Comforted

III. Prophecies of comfort (Is 40:1—66:24)

(1) Promises of Israel's deliverance from Babylonian captivity because of God's attributes (Is 40:1—48:22)

(A) Deliverance based upon God's sovereignty (40:1-31)

(a) Promise of comfort (40:1-2)

(b) Preparation for God's coming (40:3-5)

(c) God's immutable word makes the promise genuine (40:6-8)

(d) Promise based upon God's attributes: power and shepherd (40:9-11)

(e) 4 questions showing God's sovereignty (40:12-26)

(i) God is superior to the nations since he created the earth (40:12-17)

(ii) God is superior to the idols since they are manufactured by craftsmen (40:18-20)

(iii) God is superior to earthly rulers since He is eternal and they are temporary (40:21-24)

(iv) God is superior to deities since He is the creator of heavenly bodies (40:25-26)

(f) Because God cared for Judah she could be strengthened in Him (40:27-31)

Isaiah 40

III. Prophecies of comfort (Is 40:1—66:24)

(1) Promises of Israel's deliverance from Babylonian captivity because of God's attributes (Is 40:1—48:22)

(A) Deliverance based upon God's sovereignty (40:1-31)

(a) Promise of comfort (40:1-2)

1 "Comfort, comfort My people," says your God.

1 "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.

1 "Comfort! Yes, comfort my people," says your God.

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

- After the Second Coming, the surviving world's attitude toward Israel will change as the Lord commands them to speak words of peace and comfort to His people

- In Is 61:7 we'll see that instead of their shame, God's people will receive a double portion of joy in their inheritance

2 "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her guilt has been removed, That she has received of the LORD'S hand **Double for all her sins.**"

2 "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD's hand Double for all her sins."

2 "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her heavy service has been completed, that her penalty has been paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins."

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

- "...Double for all her sins" - Why? Seems unfair. "ample" is a better translation (vs. Elihu in Job 34)

- Two concepts:

(1) Israel is spoken of as God's firstborn. Firstborn is entitled to a double portion, both of good and bad.

(2) Another possibility is that it is a commercial term for "ample," debts "paid in full."

The first two verses of Is 40 give the keynote of the second part of the prophecy of Isaiah. The great theme of this section is Jesus Christ in His sufferings: Gen 3:21; 4:4; 8:20; 12:7-8; 13:18; 22:8,13; Ex 12:3-11,27; Lev 1,3-6,16-17, et al...and the glory that must follow in the Davidic Kingdom (2 Sam 7:8-15).

Since Israel is to be regathered, converted, and made the center of the new social order when the kingdom is set up, this part of Isaiah appropriately contains glowing prophecies concerning those events. The full view of the redemptive sufferings of the Messiah (Cf. Is 53) leads to the evangelic strain so prominent in this part of Isaiah (Cf. Is 44:22-23; 5:1-3).

(b) Preparation for God's coming (40:3-5)

3 The voice of one calling out, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

3 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

3 A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; and in the desert a straight highway for our God.'

3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

- John the Baptist quoted the first part of this passage when the Jewish officials asked who he was (John 1:23)
- Its complete fulfillment will come when the Lord returns

In Biblical times, when a King was about to take a journey, construction crews were sent ahead to smooth and level the road. Gullies were filled in, hill tops leveled off and all irregularities removed from the way, so the King would not feel any discomfort or experience any delay on his journey. When the Lord returns this will be accomplished supernaturally in plain view of all as the creation itself responds in joy to the arrival of the Messianic King.

4 "Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the uneven ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;

4 "Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;

4 Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill will be lowered; the rough ground will become level, and the mountain ridges made a plain.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

- All four Gospels quote v3-4 as referring to John the Baptist

5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see *it* together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see *it* together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all humanity will see it at once; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

(c) God's immutable word makes the promise genuine (40:6-8)

6 A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" **All flesh is grass**, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

6 A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

6 A voice says, "Cry out!" So I asked, "What am I to cry out?" "All humanity is grass, and all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field.

6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:
- "...All flesh is grass" - in the sense that it is transitory, here today gone tomorrow. Also, introduces symbolism later used in Revelation.

7 The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; The people are indeed grass!

7 The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass.

7 Grass withers and flowers fade away when the LORD's breath blows on them; surely the people are like grass.

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

8 Grass withers and flowers fade away, when the LORD's breath blows on them, but the word of our God will stand forever."

8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

(d) Promise based upon God's attributes: power and shepherd (40:9-11)

9 Go up on a high mountain, Zion, messenger of good news, Raise your voice forcefully, Jerusalem, messenger of **goodnews**; Raise *it* up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

9 Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift *it* up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

9 "Climb up a high mountain, you messenger of good news to Zion! Lift up your voice with strength, you messenger to Jerusalem! Lift it up! Don't be afraid! Say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God!'

9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

- "...good news" - the Gospel (2 Cor 15:1-4; 1 Peter 1:21-25)

10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, **His compensation is with Him**, And **His reward before Him**.

10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him.

10 Look! The Lord GOD comes with strength, and his arm rules for him. Look! His reward is with him, and his payment accompanies him.

10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

- "...His compensation is with Him" - quoted by Jesus in Rev 22:12

- "...His reward before Him" - work is the Day of the Lord (or Time of Jacob's Trouble, or the Great Tribulation) and his reward is with Him

11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry *them* in the fold of His robe; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry *them* in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

11 Like a shepherd, he tends his flock. He gathers the lambs in his arms, carries them close to his heart, and gently leads the mother sheep."

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

(e) 4 questions showing God's sovereignty (40:12-26)

(i) God is superior to the nations since he created the earth (40:12-17)

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And measured the heavens with a span, And calculated the dust of the earth with a measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales?

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales?

12 "Who has measured the waters of the sea in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens by the width of his hand? Who has enclosed the dust of the earth in a measuring bowl, or weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

- These questions are similar to Job's Science Quiz given to him by God in Job 40-41

13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?

13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?

13 Who has fathomed the Spirit of the LORD, or as his counselor has taught him?

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?
- Emphasis on quantitative design (not qualitative), calling our attention to God's precision

14 With whom did He consult and *who* gave Him understanding? And *who* taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, And informed Him of the way of understanding?

14 With whom did He consult and *who* gave Him understanding? And *who* taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge And informed Him of the way of understanding?

14 With whom did he consult to enlighten and instruct him on the path of justice? Or who taught him knowledge and showed him the way of wisdom?

14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.

15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.

15 "Look! The nations are like a drop in a bucket, and are reckoned as dust on the scales. Look! He even lifts up the islands like powder!

15 Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

16 Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, Nor its animals enough for a burnt offering.

16 Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, Nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering.

16 Lebanon would not provide enough fuel, nor are its animals enough for a burnt offering.

16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

17 All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.

17 All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.

17 All the nations are as nothing before him— they are reckoned by him as nothing and chaos.

17 All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

(ii) God is superior to the idols since they are manufactured by craftsmen
(40:18-20)

18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?

18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?

18 "To whom, then, will you compare me, the One who is God? Or to what image will you liken me?

18 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

19 *As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.*

19 *As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.*

19 To an idol? A craftsman makes the image, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts silver chains.

19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

20 He who is too impoverished for *such* an offering Selects a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman To prepare an idol that will not totter.

20 He who is too impoverished for *such* an offering Selects a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman To prepare an idol that will not totter.

20 To the impoverished person? He prepares an offering— wood that won't rot— Or to the one who chooses a skilled craftsman and seeks to erect an idol that won't topple?"

20 He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.

(iii) God is superior to earthly rulers since He is eternal and they are temporary (40:21-24)

21 Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

21 Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

21 "You know, don't you? You have heard, haven't you? Hasn't it been told you from the beginning? Haven't you understood from the foundations of the earth?

21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

22 It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to live in.

22 It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

22 He's the one who sits above the disk of the earth, and its inhabitants are like
grasshoppers. He's the one who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them
like a tent to live in,

22 It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as
grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a
tent to dwell in:

23 *It is* He who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.

23 He *it is* who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.

23 who brings princes to nothing, and makes void the rulers of the earth.

23 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

24 Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown, Scarcely has their
stock taken root in the earth, But He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm
carries them away like stubble.

24 Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown, Scarcely has their
stock taken root in the earth, But He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm
carries them away like stubble.

24 No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner have their stems taken
root in the earth, than he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest sweeps them
away like stubble.

24 Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not
take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the
whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

(iv) God is superior to deities since He is the creator of heavenly bodies
(40:25-26)

25 "To whom then will you compare Me That I would be *his* equal?" says the Holy One.

25 "To whom then will you liken Me That I would be *his* equal?" says the Holy One.

25 "To whom, then, will you compare me, and to whom should I be equal?" asks the Holy
One.

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26 Raise your eyes on high And see who has created these *stars*, The One who brings out their multitude by number, He **calls them all by name**; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of *His* power, Not one of *them* is missing.

26 Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these *stars*, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of *His* power, Not one of *them* is missing.

26 "Lift your eyes up to heaven and see who created all these— the one who leads out their vast array of stars by number, calling them all by name— because of his great might and his powerful strength— and not one is missing."

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

- "...calls them all by name" - Cf. Ps 147:4-5

- God does not argue for Himself in Genesis. Bible opens on the presumption of the existence of God.

— In Is 2, God articulates His Own Case. There will be much more on this through this entire section (Cf. Is 44f).

(f) Because God cared for Judah she could be strengthened in Him (40:27-31)

27 Why do you say, **Jacob**, and you assert, **Israel**, "My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"?

27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"?

27 "Jacob, why do you say— and Israel, why do you complain— 'My predicament is hidden from the LORD, and my cause is ignored by my God.'?"

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

- "Jacob...Israel" - Jacob's name was changed to Israel

— Generally, once changed it stays changed (i.e. Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah)

— However, Jacob is an exception, the name "Jacob" is used when he is being carnal, and "Israel" when he is being spiritual. The same with the nation Israel.

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is unsearchable.

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

28 Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The LORD is the eternal God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not grow tired or weary; and his understanding cannot be fathomed.

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

[Ps 121:4]

29 He gives strength to the weary, And to *the one who* lacks might He increases power.

29 He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.

29 He's the one who gives might to the faint, renewing strength for the powerless.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly,

30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly,

30 Even boys grow tired and weary, and young men collapse and fall,

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

31 Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

31 but those who keep waiting for the LORD will renew their strength. Then they'll soar on wings like eagles; they'll run and not grow weary; they'll walk and not grow tired.

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.