

031



The Father Knows Best

School of the Bible Class

Isaiah

Isaiah 40

031

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Indian Hills Community Church

Detectives looking for Eschatological Evidences in Isaiah

Tribulation and Kingdom Truth



Continuing

Isaiah 40

- **At long last!**
- **We come to Isaiah 40—the Glory Phase of the Lord’s plan for the ages—the eschaton.**
- **The shift to the next major section of the book is so dramatic that scoffers have postulated that it has another author—some even suggest three such divisions in the book.**
- **Not so! The book has a striking, marvelous and humbling unity.**
- **Remember Isaiah must be a compilation of his histories and prophecies assembled in the book carrying his name.**

Isaiah 40:1-5

- **Isaiah is an account of the salvation of Israel but surprising to us as we reflect on these opening verses we cannot help but recount our personal salvation experiences with the God who has saved us.**
- **If Israel is to be comforted (40:1) we too can identify with the same comfort because our sins have been forgiven—as our warfare against our Maker has ended.**

Isaiah 40:1-5

- These opening verses are in the **voice of God**.
- Here we might think of the thundering voice at Mt Sinai as God spoke directly to His people.
- Here we again have the **voice of God** in the written text just as authoritatively as if spoken audibly.
- This is clearly so because the section ends with—“**For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.**”
- So how can we read these words with the **striking majesty of God's voice**. It all seems so inadequate!

Isaiah 40:1-5

- But the text must be read!
- While we cannot duplicate the **voice of God** we can offer up the finest of **human voices to read the poetic text**—
- Not everyone appreciates the operatic tenor voice but in my estimation it alone appropriates the voice of God and demands our attention.
- So rather than read the text we will offer the text in a dramatic musical form. This reading lasts about 7 minutes. as composed by G. F. Handel in the Messiah— An Oratorio.

In the Eschaton—The End of Sin

¹“Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God.

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 (grace) for all her sins.”

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

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;

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

Isaiah 40:1–5

1“Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God.

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 (grace) for all her sins.”

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

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;

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

Isaiah 40:1–5

In the Eschaton—The End of Sin

- At 2nd Coming. Comfort (2x) ye My people—
- At 2nd Coming. Your warfare ended— your iniquity has been pardoned. This is the nation wide pardon at end of Tribulation
- At 2nd Coming. Ending resistance. Make straight the Highway for our God. (Conversion of souls “all Israel will be saved”)
- At 2nd Coming. Every Valley will be exalted, every hill be made low. (Restoration of the earth as per 2 Peter 3 and Rev. 6-18)
- At 2nd Coming. The Glory of God will be revealed. (Glory is in the eschaton—the Messianic Eternal Kingdom.)
- At 2nd Coming. All flesh will see it together. Every knee shall bow.
- Authority is without question. The mouth the Lord has spoken it. (Surety is offered.)

The Restoration in Compact Form

- We have then in these five verses the entire restoration of “Eden.”
- This includes the redemption of the people and nature, the habitat for humanity and its creatures.
- These verses are not figurative: Too quickly, there is a temptation to force these verses on the returning Jews from Babylon. But that demands hyperbole, exaggeration and unnecessary over-figurative speech (if not allegory). Of course John the Baptist cites making the “pathway straight” challenging the Jews to welcome Jesus their Messiah.
- And we have no reason to make something else of real hills, mountains valleys and plains. We know from Revelation that there is a reordering of the earth’s surfaces—a small thing in comparison to our salvation,

We can draw clear parallels between Israel
and our own Christian experience.
That is why so many verses in Isaiah
are committed to memory.

The Stage is Set

The Redemption of Israel

Isaiah 1-39

- We will use Andy Woods' observation that peace follows judgment. We will see this in the make up of Isaiah.
- To finish the 360° cycle, disobedience precedes judgment.
- Therefore, we would characterize chapters 1-39 as God's **warning and Israel's laments** as the **major theme** and the Lord's **restoration** as the **minor theme**.
- Contrast this with a reversal of emphasis (40-66), where **restoration is the major theme** and the **warnings and laments are the minor**.

Isaiah the Book

- As we said last week the history of the book is necessary to set the times and the conditions of the prophecy, Loosely 750-680.
- But the unparalleled value is in its prophetic contribution.
- While the historical is foundational is not as important as the prophetic contribution of the Old Testament.

History the Minor Subject

- **Recapping: Isaiah's covers the times of the threats and conquest of Assyria over the North 721 and the prophetic threats of Babylon with its conquest of the Judah in the south (605-586)—and after 70 years "Israel" is returned to the Land by Cyrus the Great starting in circa 539**

The Diaspora 1st and 2nd

- Since the Judean exile was to a **single nation** Babylon—and since many (most) of them never returned to the Land, they are subsequently considered Jews in “a diaspora.” (At the time of Jesus some returned to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost.)
- But the Scriptures reveals that the Jews will be scattered to the whole world amongst **many nations** after AD 70-135; a second, the REAL Diaspora.

The Diaspora 1st and 2nd

- Those who see no prophetic sense in Isaiah, quickly move to make these passages the 1) return from Babylon—as the 2) rebuilding of Jerusalem and the 3) obedience of the people as completely satisfied in the return from the Babylonian exile. Even history does not match.
- And this forces a late date for Isaiah—written later as history. Not the right camp to be in!

The Diaspora 1st and 2nd

- The disdain for the supernatural (Jewish hope) drives a false conclusion.
- Unless clearly indicated (e.g. by names etc.), we take the passages, outlined in 40:1-5 as literal—the full **return to the Land of the Diaspora, “rebuilding” Temple (Ezek. 40) of (new) Jerusalem (John) and the obedience of the people (New Covenant) all under the reign of the Messianic King who will return to the earth having restored it as the new Garden of Eden. (or better).**

When in Doubt Assume the Prophetic

- Therefore our exegetical task is quite simple—take the text in the literal sense— always expect it to be prophetic unless the text makes it impossible to do so.
- For example historical truth—“It is I who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.’ And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’ And of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid.’” Isaiah 44:28 Similar in how to take Rev. 6-19.

Now to Introduce Isaiah 40-66

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- 2009 Smith, Gary U. Isaiah 40-66: Volume 15 (The New American Commentary) (p. 16). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.
- “The message of chapters 40-66 is above all else a word of **comfort and good news**. It offers hope for both the person who is weary because of the trials of life and for the person who may think that God has forgotten about them.
- “These oracles of salvation offer God's strength because God is near to help and able to deliver his people from danger. (My point—how easily it is to appropriate the truth of God’s redeeming grace to our lives.)

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- “Although God may seem to be far away at times, he never forgets his children and always is attentive to hear and answer their prayers. He is a God who is powerful because he has a strong arm and can overcome any obstacle.
- “The major political and economic problems of this world amount to nothing in his eyes because he is able to direct the course of history.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- “Thus the challenge is for every believer to gain an authentic understanding of **just how great God really is**. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the one who knows the name of every star, the one who controls the rise and fall of nations and their leaders, the compassionate Redeemer of his people, the Holy one, and the King (metaphorical) of this universe.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- “Once a person begins to catch Isaiah's vision of God's incomparable power and his wonderful plans for this world, he can begin to rest in the knowledge that God can give each person who trusts in him the ability to overcome every threat and victoriously endure every challenge.
- Ed: This is the payoff in studying eschatology! It is good for our daily living—how great is our God.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- “The prophecies in chaps. 40-66 do not predict that there will be no problems; in fact, the lives of the Israelites addressed in these oracles were full of problems. Some fell into sin and worshipped pagan gods, some were rebellious and stubborn so that they did not follow God's directions. Others prayed at pagan high places and offered useless sacrifices that did not honor God. Sin always causes a separation from God and usually results in some much needed divine discipline.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- But God has revealed in these prophecies the good news that his chosen Servant will bring into existence a new world of justice for all people in every nation and make possible a new covenant relationship with God.
- “This Servant will suffer for the sins of others, bear the guilt for their sins, and take on himself the punishment that these sinners deserved. This Servant will be exalted for his work and will exalt all those who confess their sins and follow the path of the suffering Servant.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- Another part of this good news is found in a series of salvation proclamations about God's preparation of a glorious city in Zion where he will dwell in all his glory. He will bring all his servants to this wonderful place so that they can glorify God for the rest of eternity. People from all the nations of the earth will flock to Zion to join the millions of others praising God and glorifying his name. This will be a wonderful time when all the people on earth will be holy; there will be no sorrow or shame, and there will be peace in all the earth.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- If this sounds like an inviting place to be, then it would be wise to spend some time reading the book of Isaiah to hear about all the details that are explained in these prophecies.
- These prophetic words were written to inform and to persuade people to join the millions who will be enjoying the most fulfilling experience that will be greater than anything they have ever imagined.
- Once people understand how great God is and what he plans to do for his people, many will want to confess their sins and be forgiven. Then they can confidently know that they will one day live in that holy city with God because their future destiny is secure.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- Although God's marvelous thoughts and ways are far above and beyond any of our thoughts, God has given a glimpse into some of his thoughts in the prophecies in the book of Isaiah. It is a breathtaking story with unbelievably tragic failures by the enemies of God, but it also has a fantastic ending for those who love and serve God.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- The heights of God's wrath are illustrated as he tramples the wicked in his anger, but his tender love is illustrated by comparing him to a shepherd who gently carries his lambs to safety.
- These oracles record the preaching of a prophet who might be called an Old Testament evangelist. He gives his audience two choices, either glorify God and enjoy life in his presence forever or reject him and end up in that other terrible place where the fire never goes out and the worm never dies.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- Gary Smith's personal word: In the preface to volume one, which deals with Isaiah 1-39, I compared the writing of this commentary to the challenges of climbing Mount Everest.
- At that time I thought I knew the terrain of the mountain and many of the dangers of the trek, but as I have climbed to even higher peaks in chaps. 40-66, I realized again just how difficult this journey is.
- There are so many contradictory opinions on which path to take and so many different interpretations of the evidence within these prophecies that a person sometimes wonders which way to turn.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- To be safe it is sometimes easier to follow the path of great men who have blazed the trail through Isaiah in the past, but there are from time to time opportunities to blaze some new trails where few have ventured.
- I have learned much from the mistakes and the wisdom of past travelers through Isaiah, especially the great Dutch commentator J. L. Koole, but I have tried also to lay down some new trails for readers to examine, evaluate, and follow.

In the Words of Gary Smith

His perspective is the Heaven will be on earth

- Some will no doubt be rightly skeptical of these new trails and want to keep to the security of the old paths, but I invite all who read this commentary to expand their imagination about what these prophecies might be saying.
- I pray that some will offer additional evidence to enhance the perspective of these new paths and that some will correct ideas where mistakes were made so that the truth that God was sharing through this prophet will ultimately cause the light of God's word to shine more brightly to a world that needs to hear some good news for a change.

Autobiographical

- We too have been climbing Mt. Everest and find that the climb is scary but rewarding.
- How is it that so many have been following the wrong trail and end with an another world's heaven in an unknown place.
- Yes it is possible for error to gain the persona of the truth. Just to infant baptism in the mind or believing Lutherans. The word in its literal sense is our safe haven.
- Here we find our security and ultimate comfort in spite of the cross winds that blow from church history.
- The study of Isaiah the salvation of Israel is now before us—

Thus Far—