

## EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #55

Isaiah 40:1-11

The Bible has 66 books, 39 in the O.T. and 27 in the N.T. The O.T. books deal with sin, law and judgment and the N.T. books deal with grace and forgiveness. It is no wonder that Isaiah has been called the “miniature Bible” because it breaks down exactly the same way.

The first 39 chapters of the book of Isaiah have been filled with messages of warning and judgment. However, the last 27 chapters of the book of Isaiah are filled with promises of salvation and restoration. The first 39 chapters are cause for great concern, but the final 27 chapters are cause for great comfort.

Dr. John Martin says that the final 27 chapters in Isaiah may be divided into three main parts, each comprised of nine chapters: 1) Chapters 40-48; 2) Chapters 49-57; 3) Chapters 58-66. The first two sections end with the phrase “there is no peace for the wicked” (48:22; 57:21) (*Isaiah*, p. 1091). Dr. Warren Wiersbe said **chapters 40-48 emphasize the greatness of God, chapters 49-57 emphasize the graciousness of God, and chapters 58-66 emphasize the glory of God** (*Be Comforted*, p. 106). At the heart of this section is the prediction of the God/Messiah/Savior who would suffer in order to save.

The chronology of these chapters is no mere coincidence. **Chapter 40** begins with the ministry of John the Baptist the forerunner of Jesus Christ (**40:3-5**) and chapter 66 ends with a discussion of the new heavens and new earth (66:22) and many who are forever burning in hell (66:24). This is precisely how the New Testament develops. It begins with Christ coming into this world and ends with Him creating a new heaven, new earth and new Jerusalem. The first message that Isaiah presents in this section is this:

**GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE COMFORTED BY KNOWING HIS FUTURE DELIVERENCE IS ON THE WAY, THROUGH A GOD/PERSON WHO WILL BE ANNOUNCED TO THE WORLD AND WILL ONE DAY COME AND RULE THE WORLD AND PERSONALLY TAKE CARE OF HIS PEOPLE.**

In any intimidating situation, it is a wonderful thing to know when help is on the way.

The word “comfort” is repeated twice for emphasis in **verse 1** and this particular word is used some 13 times in chapters 40-66. It is the theme of the rest of Isaiah. The Hebrew verb here is in the Piel stem, which means God wants this to be an eager and intense action (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 141). In other words, God wants His people aggressively and intensely comforted. He does not want them grieving or sad anymore. The actual word “comfort” is closely connected to the idea that one is comforted because he has been revenged concerning wrongs that have been done (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 544).

We may notice that the comfort of God is only for the people of God, and that God is identified as “your” God, that is, He is the God of His people. Comfort is only for God’s people. We may also notice that part of the comforting process was that God was “speaking kindly” to Jerusalem.

The reason this is stressed is because when Jerusalem is in a right relationship with God, there will be great comfort for Israel. The idea of “speak kindly” to Jerusalem is the idea of speaking tenderly to the heart.

Now the context is that of coming after chapter 39 in which Isaiah told Hezekiah that they would be taken captive by the Babylonians. There isn’t much comforting news in that message. However, God wanted His people to realize that this will not be forever. One day Jerusalem will be the very place that features the presence and the Person of God. God wants His people hopeful especially in view of His prophetic Scriptures found in the eternal Word of God.

God’s true ministers have the responsibility to proclaim the severe judgments of God to both Israel and the Church and they have the responsibility to proclaim the amazing comforting Grace of God to both Israel and the Church. They have the responsibility to teach Biblical prophecy and give God’s people comforting hope through it. That is precisely what Isaiah does.

There are four comforting messages that Isaiah presents in these verses:

**MESSAGE #1** – God wants His people comforted knowing He has forgiven them. **40:1-2**

Now you will notice that there are three very comforting facts given in **verse 2**:

**Fact #1** - Your warfare has ended. **40:2a**

Keep in mind that this message is to Israel, specifically Jerusalem. She has never known a time when her warfare is ended, but she will. What a wonderful day it will be when there is no more war for Israel, and what a day it will be when we have no more warfare either.

**Fact #2** - Your iniquity has been removed. **40:2b**

This is speaking of a national forgiveness of the nation Israel when He has removed all her sin and given her the land. God is not able to bless anyone until the sin issue has been resolved. This is true for Israel nationally and it is true for us individually.

**Fact #3** - Your punishment is done. **40:2c**

When God says He had paid them double for their sins, He is not saying He paid them back more than they deserved, in fact, this is amazing grace. Had He paid Israel back in accordance with their sins, He would have paid them back way more than double. John Calvin said this idea must “relate to the mercy of God” (*Commentary on Isaiah*, Vol. 8, p. 203). In fact, later Isaiah says she will have a double portion of God’s blessings in everything (Isaiah 61:7). The nation deserved severer punishments than what God ever gave her, but in His amazing grace He set His own punishment limit, and one day will grant her His eternal blessings.

God begins this section of comfort by bringing up the necessity of having sins forgiven, for God’s blessings and comfort cannot possibly exist until the sin issue has been resolved.

**MESSAGE #2** – God wants His people comforted knowing He will rule and He will change the world. **40:3-5**

In these verses Isaiah presents the idea that God would send some voice to call out to clear the way for the Lord. The voice of God would come through someone who would call out to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. **Each of the Gospel writers applied this very section of Isaiah to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-4; Mark 1:1-4; Luke 1:76-78; John 1:23).**

John the Baptist literally came out of the wilderness and he cried out a message which said repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand and your King is at hand. The Person he identified was Jesus Christ. So Jesus Christ is Jehovah (LORD) and God (Elohim) (v. 3) because He was announced to Israel by John.

What is predicted here is absolutely amazing. In fact, some have just tried to spiritualize **verse 4** by presenting the idea that He really isn't going to smooth out the Promised Land, and lift up valleys, and level mountains and hills, and smooth out all rough terrain. However, that is precisely what God is going to do (Zechariah 14:10). In fact, Zechariah predicts that when Christ returns, He will literally split the Mount of Olives and create amazing valleys as escape routes for His people before He destroys the nations (Zechariah 14:4-5). Isaiah predicts that He will turn the Promised Land into an Eden-type garden (Isaiah 51:3). If we carefully examine Isaiah 40:12-26, which we will do next time, it is quite clear that God is a sovereign God and sovereign Creator who is able to literally do what is predicted in **verse 4**. This will all happen when "all flesh" (v. 5) will literally see Jesus Christ when He comes after the Tribulation (Matthew 24:30).

When His Son comes to rule the world, there will be tremendous changes to physiological topography and geography of the Promised Land. He will literally turn all of the Promised Land into a glorious land. What He will actually do is, as Harry Bultema says, "make low that which is elevated and exalt that which is low" (*Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 377). Dr. John Walvoord said of this text, "Imbedded in countless prophecies are predictions of a manifested glory which will feature the millennial earth" (*The Doctrine of the Millennium*, Bib. Sac., Vol. 115, p. 98).

Until Jesus Christ returns, this world is a wild and dangerous wilderness filled with evil and threatening things. The nation Israel was in a worldly wilderness and was about to be taken captive by the Babylonians, and God says eventually I will come and straighten the world out. God will eventually come in all of His glory and "all flesh," that is, all of mankind will see Him. He will literally physically and spiritually straighten out the world.

When you are a child of God in this world there are times when you begin to think that you are in a frightful wilderness. There is a comforting voice that cries out to us that says, "I will take care of you and I will come and get you." We need to keep our focus on God's prophetic Word.

**MESSAGE #3** – God wants His people comforted knowing He fulfills His eternal Word.  
**40:6-8**

A second voice calls out concerning the Word of God. This is the voice of God, or as **verse 5** calls it, “the mouth of Jehovah.” The first voice is the voice of a prophet, but the second voice is the voice of God calling out the Word of God which is literal and eternal.

The “all flesh” of **verse 6** again refers to all living people on earth.

Now we may notice from **verse 6** that Isaiah asks a question - “What message shall be called out?” “What should I cry?” God’s answer is - you cry out the frailty of human life and the ultimate nothingness of what he thinks, is and has when compared to Me and My Word. People are temporary, like withering grass or a fading flower, but the Word of God stands forever. It doesn’t matter who the person is or what they have or what they have accomplished. Sooner or later they blow away and they wither. It doesn’t matter how beautiful they were. They could have been as beautiful as a lovely flower and sooner or later they fade.

Notice what is said in **verse 7**; when the Spirit of God blows on someone, that one realizes how insignificant he truly is in this wilderness of the world. But God’s people need not despair or be discouraged by this reality for there is a Word that is sure and durable. There is an eternal Word of God that promises that we may know that this temporal world is not our final home.

When God’s people know God’s Word and realize His prophecies stand forever, it does bring great comfort. For we know that God will eventually destroy the wicked and rule the world and we will reign with Him.

Isaiah was so overwhelmed by what he heard that God was going to do to comfort His people, that he was humbled by the great distance and gap between finite, temporal man and the infinite eternal God.

Isaiah says something that every person needs to remember this year - man is short-lived and man lives his entire life under the Sovereign God, and the moment God says it is time for the grass to wither and the flower to fade, man is gone but not the Word of God. It forever stays and stands.

When we look at what is said in the last part of **verse 8**, it should prompt every single believer to want to accurately know and understand every book, every chapter and every verse of the Bible. In fact, one old Bible scholar said, “As the end draws nearer we do greatly need the simplicity to rest upon God’s Word” (F. C. Jennings, *Studies in Isaiah*, p. 467).

God’s Word should be put back in every school and it should be revered and carefully taught. No teacher in a classroom will live forever. No student in a classroom will live forever. God’s Word will live forever, so the smartest thing one can do in an educational system is to focus on the Word of God.

**MESSAGE #4** – God wants His people comforted knowing they need to seek Him because He will sovereignly come to care for them. **40:9-11**

God calls His people to get to the mountains (**40:9**). This is literal and this is physical and this has to do with Israel. Jesus Christ told Israel that just before He comes to establish His kingdom, Jewish people are literally going to need to flee to the mountains, especially when they see the European world leader enter the Promised Land, specifically the Temple (**Matthew 24:15-16**).

When Israel sees the “abomination of desolation” she may know that her redemption is near. God is about to come in the Person of Jesus Christ to save her and shepherd her. He is coming to rule the world and He will deliver His nation Israel.

What glorious truth this is - God will come with His strong arm and He will rule the world. He will wipe out all forms of government that people arrogantly thought were so wonderful. He will wipe out communism, socialism, and Nazism. There will be no more godless democracy in which a bunch of politicians try to rule without God or His Word. God is coming, Jesus Christ is coming and He will take over the whole world.

What amazing comforting news to present to a nation who has been held captive ever since the days of the Babylonians.

There is One coming to deliver His people, the One coming to shepherd His people who is the Sovereign, Almighty God and Creator of all things. The One coming is Israel’s God. Do not miss this. Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ will gather His sheep into His fold and He will one day rule the world and tenderly care for His own.

There is great comfort in knowing this prophetic truth and there is greater comfort in knowing Him. Notice **verse 10**. When Christ comes, His reward and recompense come with Him. The specific reward and recompense Isaiah is talking about, is the wrath of God when God comes to reward and pay back all God-mockers and Christ-rejecters for their sin. Are you ready for Him to come?

One day every eye will see Him. Will you see Him as your Savior and Shepherd or as your condemnatory Judge?