

The Consolation of Hope

Isaiah 40

There is an distinct change in Isaiah 40. Isaiah's tone changes from God's condemnation (1-39) to God's comfort (40-66). The last 27 chapters of Isaiah has been called "the Book of Consolation." The burdens and griefs are over (40:2). Israel's conversion is emphasized. The One who pronounced the burdens would now become the "burden-bearer."

The difference in Isaiah's style is so dramatic that some liberal scholars believe a different "Isaiah" wrote Isaiah 40-66. However, Jesus confirms only one Isaiah wrote the entire book (John 12:37-41). [See Isaiah 40-66 in the Introduction to Isaiah.]

The main prophecies of Isaiah 40-66 concern the future of the Jews as it relates to Christ's first and second coming. It was a message of "hope" for God's people who were held captive in Babylon.

Warren Wiersbe divides Isaiah 40-66 in to three sections:

1. 40-48—The **Greatness** of God compared to the vanity of man's idols.
 2. 49-57—The **Grace** of God manifested in His Son.
 3. 58-66—The **Glory** of God revealed in the kingdom of His Son.
 - The phrase, Forasmuch as ye have despised my word, ye shall despise my voice, separates the first two sections (48:22; 57:21).
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➡ Two concurrent themes in Isaiah 40:

- The **Power** of God (vs. 5, 8, 10-14, 22, 25, 28).
- The **Puniness** of man (vs. 6, 15-17, 23-24, 30).

I. **God's MESSAGE of comfort** (vs. 1-11).

- ➡ v. 1—The original readers of Isaiah's prophecy were mainly the Jewish remnant held captive in Babylon. They were discouraged. They needed a word of comfort that God had not forgotten them (v. 27). In spite of all Israel's sin, God still called them My people. The exhortation, Be still, and know that I am God, or "Be still, and know that I am God" is found seven times in these chapters. God will eventually come and restore them to their homeland.

We live in a hostile world. People are seeking for comfort everywhere, but cannot find it. The only place to find lasting comfort is in _____ (2 Cor. 1:3-4). The Holy Ghost is _____ (John 14:16). The Bible is given to comfort those who read it and believe it (Rom. 15:4; 1 Thess. 4:18).

- God repeats _____ twice for emphasis. It reinforces the need of God's people to be encouraged.
 - A great lesson for parents. After they've disciplined their child, that child must be comforted. Chastening must be balanced with love.
- A. Comfort of lasting **PEACE** (v. 2). Butler—God's judgment is over. The wars are finished.
- B. Comfort of full **PARDON** (v. 2; Rom. 4:7).
1. The history of the Jews is one of reaping for their sins (cf. 1 Thess. 2:14-16). Israel will receive double for her sins (Jer. 16:18).
 - NOTE: Israel was God's _____ (Ex. 4:22). The firstborn would receive a double portion of blessing. Likewise, disobedience would bring a double portion of chastisement.
 2. When Christ comes at the end of the tribulation, Israel's sins will be pardoned and her troubles will be over (Jer. 50:20; Heb. 8:10-12).
 - PARDON—When a criminal is "pardoned" the record of his crime is destroyed as if he never committed it.
- C. Comfort of God's **PROMISE** (vs. 3-5, 9-11).
- NOTE (v. 3): Jesus ("_____") is called _____."
1. The CRY to prepare (vs. 3-5). "... _____ ..." (v. 1). Be emphatic.
 - a) John the Baptist was God's voice at Christ's first coming (Mt. 3:3; Mk. 1:1-4; Luke 3:1-6).
 - b) John's ministry was that of a "forerunner" who proclaimed the coming of the King and prepared the people for His ar-

rival. John never drew attention to himself. He always pointed to the One coming after him (John 1:19-23). Likewise, we must not focus on ourselves, but point people to Christ.

- c) Israel rejected John's ministry at Christ's first coming. Therefore, the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1-9) and God's two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-12) will prepare the way for His second coming.

A Picture of REVIVAL (vs. 4-5). The need of revival is seen when things are out of balance. When revival comes, things are leveled out.

1. Valleys of discouragement are filled in.
 2. Mountains of pride are brought low.
 3. Crooked ways of sin are straighten out.
 4. Rough places of trials are smoothed over.
 5. Then God's glory will be revealed. The manifestation of God's glory is the bottom line of everything!
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➡v. 5—**Gap principle.** FIRST COMING— A

[GAP] SECOND COMING—...

. ALL flesh did not see the glory of the Lord at Christ's first coming but they will at His second coming (John 1:14 cf. Mt. 25:31-32; Luke 21:27 Rev. 1:7).

- Before Christ's second coming God will "turn off" the lights. Everything will be dark. Suddenly Christ's glory will pierce through the darkness as He arises as **Sun** (Mt. 24:29-30).

2. The CERTAINTY of the promise (v. 5—).
3. The CHEER of the promise (vs. 9-11). **GOOD tidings** (gospel). A welcomed promise for those who long for Christ's coming!

- a) The _____ of the tidings (v. 9a—“_____”). The good news is worth being proclaimed from an elevated position (Judges 9:7; Mt. 5:1-2).
- b) The _____ of the tidings (v. 9a—_____”). Make is loud and clear! Don’t hold back!
- c) The _____ of the tidings (v. 9b— *B* _____ !). Israel will finally recognize Jesus is Messiah!
- d) The _____ of the tidings (vs. 10-11). He comes with a _____ to deliver (Ex. 13:9) and an arm to rule (Ezek. 20:33). Jesus will come as Sovereign to rule and Shepherd to care (vs. 10-11 cf. 1 Pet. 5:4). Christ first coming was characterized by humility. His second coming will be with a _____ (v. 10) and authority! He will rule and reign with a _____ (Rev. 19:15).

D. Comfort of the Word’s **PERMANENCE** (vs. 6-8).

- ➡ v. 6— _____ ? Answer—Proclaim the _____ of man and _____ of God’s Word. Man is _____ (James 1:14). God’s Word is _____ (Ps. 119:89; 1 Pet. 1:23-25 cf. Mt. 24:35).

II. God’s MAJESTY in creation (vs. 12-27).

- ➡ Three questions (vs. 12-14) reveal three things about God: (1) God is a person (_____), (2) He is all powerful, and (3) all knowing.

Can you imagine the audacity of someone who thinks they can counsel or teach the One who measured the seas in His palm... who holds the heavens in His hand... who calculates the grains of dust on the earth... who weighs the mountains, and who created the stars? (v. 26; Rom. 11:33-35; Job 40:2).

Have you ever tried to tell God how He should answer your prayers—“OK Lord, this is what You need to do for me...”

A. **God’s GREATNESS** (vs. 15-26; v. 26— _____). “ _____ A !

1. God is greater than the nations (vs. 15-17). A comforting truth!

2. God is greater than the idols (vs. 18-20). Man makes idols out of the stuff God created! Idols of gold or silver are a rich man's god (v. 19). Idols of wood are a poor man's god (v. 20). There ain't nobody like the Lord (v. 18 cf. 25! Any attempt to make a god out of an idol futile and foolish (v. 26)!
- v. 25—RIDDLE: "What is it that you have seen that God has not seen?" ANSWER: God has never seen His equal, but I see mine every day.

3. God is greater than earthly rulers.

➡ In comparison to the greatness of God men and nations are like " " (vs. 6-7); " *of* " (v. 15); " " (v. 17); " " (v. 22).

➡ There is no excuse for not knowing the true God! v. 21—God asks...

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➡ God is so great He sits on top of (v. 22)! He stretched out the universe like He was hanging a curtain or setting up a tent.

- B. **God's GOVERNMENT** (v. 23-24). The rulers of the earth can do nothing apart from God's permissive will. God could reduce them to nothing in a moments notice (v. 23). No earthly ruler is permanent (v. 24; Luke 1:52). Another comforting thought!

- v. 26— (Ps. 19:1). God created the universe, named the stars (Ps. 147:4), and everything runs perfectly it.
- vs. 27-28—If any people ought to know God, it would be Israel. Since God knows the names of all the stars, why would Israel say their way was hidden from the Lord (v. 28)?

III. **God's MIGHT for the faint** (vs. 28-31).

- Adrian Rogers brings out two points from Isaiah 40:29-31:
1. The problem of STRESS (vs. 29-30). Stress comes from the demands of service... the dissipations of sin... the devastation of storms... and the devices of Satan.
 2. The promise of STRENGTH (vs. 29, 31). The promise of strength comes by waiting on the Lord. The Christian life is lived by HIS STRENGTH, not ours (v. 29).
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- Recently I ate lunch at Callahan Barbecue in Callahan, FL. It is a popular place for local residents to eat. Many cars were lined up at the drive thru. They waited for about 30 minutes to get their order because the food was worth the wait.
- Waiting on God is worth the wait.
shall be...
- A. **Renewed**—“ *renew* .” Gas tanks need refueling and batteries need recharging. This happens during a waiting period.
 - B. **Raised up**—“ *mount up* .” Waiting on God lifts you above your trials and circumstances.
 - C. **Running**—“ *run...*” We must “ *with patience* (Heb. 12:1).
 - D. **Resilient**—“ *not faint.*” Have you ever noticed the first thing that gives out on an athlete is his legs.

Notice the order: Flying... Running ... Walking. Some may think the order is strange or backward—First a person walks, then runs, and finally flies. But the order in Isaiah 30:31 is correct. A new Christian is usually eager to fly or run the race for God. But, flying or running is over fairly quickly. The test of a Christian’s commitment is seen in their day-by-day WALK. The Christian life is not a sprint, it is a marathon. Endurance! Plodding. William Carey, “Father of Modern Missions,” said any success he may have achieved (humanly speaking), was because, “I can plod... I can persevere in any definite pursuit... to this I owe everything. Anything beyond this credit will be too much.”

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