

Introduction to Isaiah 40

In chapter 35 we saw the signs of the Messiah, the last days ... with the church seen triumphant returning as a “remnant” along the King’s Highway. A most exquisite representation of the redeemed traveling home to God

Isaiah 35:8-10 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it [shall be] for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err [therein]. 9 No lion shall be there, nor [any] ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk [there]: 10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 37:36 Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they [were] all dead corpses.

The destruction of the Assyrian Army is the grand climax which Isaiah had given assurance no less than 9 times in the proceeding chapters.

**Chapter 38 Hezekiah is sick - prays and God grants him 15 more years
chapter 39 Then the Babylonian captivity is foretold.**

Isaiah 39:3-7 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, [even] from Babylon. 4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that [is] in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. 5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 6 Behold, the days come, that all that [is] in thine house, and

[that] which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Isaiah 40

In chapters 40 through 66, Isaiah jumps in time to the future ... the subject matter changes and the following chapters are utterly unlike the first 39 chapters of the book. "Scholars" theorize, conceived, and pontificate that it comes from one or two different authors who lived a century or more after Isaiah's. Some even fanaticize Isaiah 56-66 is written by a "third Isaiah."

The truth is: Isaiah is transported by vision almost 200 years in the future and picks up at the ending of the future Babylonian captivity.

Those professors who consider themselves too enlightened to believe in God and predictive prophecy, have chosen the field of "Biblical criticism" to make their living. They have been quite successful in engorging their bank accounts with much filthy lucre writing books on the theory there was not just one Isaiah ... but maybe 2 ... maybe 3 ?

Those who do not believe in predictive prophecy say this must have been written after Cyrus came to power ... because of the naming of Cyrus the Great 576 – 530 BC long before he was born. They have no evidence other than their presupposition and prejudice against Divine inspiration and belief that no one can tell the future.

Yet God says predictive prophecy is exactly the way you can know He is God, and His Word is true.

Isaiah 41:21-24 Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong [reasons], saith the King of Jacob. 22 Let them bring [them] forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former

things, what they [be], that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye [are] gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold [it] together. 24 Behold, ye [are] of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination [is he that] chooseth you.

Skeptics say the Isaiah 40 setting is no longer in Palestine, but Babylon. They say it is too correct for it contains knowledge no man could know ... for it accurately predicts the future. Some of these arguments are: They say Isaiah names himself in Chapters 1-39, but “the author of 40-66 never names himself.” Liberal scholars have a naturalistic view, and it is unpopular at the academies, Colleges and seminaries to believe in predictive prophecy or any kind of miracle.

The Mede O Persian King “Cyrus the Great” is pictured in the Old Testament as the patron and deliverer of the Jews. He is mentioned 23 times by name and eluded to several more times. According to the Bible, Cyrus was the King under whom the Babylonian captivity ended. In the first year of his reign he was led by God to decree that the Temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt and that any Jews who wanted to might return home ... sending back with them the sacred vessels which had been taken from the First Temple and a considerable sum of money with which to buy building materials.

It is our unwavering conviction that all of the prophecy in Isaiah was written by the one and only Isaiah and that no one except Isaiah could possibly have written a line of it. His special pet name for God used only by him in the whole Bible “The Holy One of Israel” is used throughout the book giving internal evidence of the one author.

Isaiah was a member of the Royal family, a great scholar, scribe, and poet. There are 25 “Isaiah words” unique to Isaiah, in the Hebrew Bible that only Isaiah uses. All 25 of these words are used in the

Judgment section of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39, and all 25 of these words are used in the Comfort section of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66.

The Jews have always accepted only one Isaiah.

The book of Ecclesiasticus from the Jewish Apocrypha names Isaiah as the sole author, so we know the Jewish thinking about 200 BC.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, skeptics just knew that they would find Isaiah separated in 2 or 3 parts. The Great Isaiah Scroll known as the Saint Mark's Isaiah Dead Sea Scroll, or, 1 Q ISAI AH is remarkable at this spot. Remember, chapter and verse divisions were invented in about 1,600 AD. Isaiah 39 ends with only space for 2 more lines on the page. Instead of doing the easy thing ... jumping to a new page, and beginning Chapter 40 there, the Scroll continues on, and puts the first 2 lines of Chapter 40 at the bottom of the same page. This should alert us again that Jews in the Second Century BC considered Isaiah one work and there is no division between 39 & 40.

In chapter 40 there is a bounce in time to the "last days" and the time of the Messiah ... specifically John the Baptist's ministry is named.

The inspired writers of the New Testament quoted from this last section of Isaiah no less than thirty-seven times. Almost always they name "Isaiah" or "Isaiah the prophet" as the author of these passages they quoted from Isaiah 40-66. Here is the real evidence on the authorship of Isaiah's prophecy, as contrasted with the "hog wash" advocated by the critics. Who were these New Testament spokesmen and writers? Only Jesus, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter and Paul.

John 12:37-38 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? (found in Isaiah 53:1)

John 12:39-40 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with [their] eyes, nor understand with [their] heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.(Found in Isaiah 6:10)

It would also make sense that the royal archive, in First Temple Jerusalem, would have contained records of Isaiah's prophecies. We have seen that Isaiah's seal & Hezekiah's seal were both found within feet of each other in the ruins of the royal library. The royal archives of the Semitic city-state of Mari held records of prophecies 1,000 years before Isaiah & Hezekiah. The royal archives of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh held records of prophecies too, some written during, and after, Isaiah's time.

Keeping records of prophecies in royal archives seems have been the normal way to conduct the affairs of State.

Isaiah 40:1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

God still has a people, despite the sins and rebellions of Israel. Although the sinful people are to undergo well-deserved judgment and punishment, there remains nevertheless a "righteous remnant." The remnant are the "people" whom God will comfort. This chapter has no reference whatever to Babylon, or to anything that happened to Israel after the prophecy of their coming captivity found in chap. 39

In Isaiah 40:2 says Judah will endure hard military service (warfare) and receive "double" penalty from God for her sins. "The double punishment refers, perhaps, to (a) the seventy years of captivity, and (b) the eternal punishment visited upon Christ the sin-bearer of people

Isaiah 40:2 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.

These are pictures of prophetic certainty, a fact proved by the truth that Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah had not yet actually received the forgiveness of her sins, nor had her warfare then been accomplished.

But note the use of the future perfect tense verb "hath"

As a matter of fact, the captivity lay more than a century in the future in Jeremiah's time. Isaiah, sees it as already accomplished in the Divine counsels, and so announces it to the people in the past tense.

These two verses serve notice upon us that the theme of prophecy here encompasses the far distant future and the times of the Messiah. The ultimate comfort of God's "righteous remnant" will not be their return from physical captivity in Babylon ... though that will be included, but will principally consist of salvation, the forgiveness of their sins. This is a benefit which will depend upon the achievement of the Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom.

Isaiah 40:3 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.

The King is Coming Repent.

Every Gospel writer Jesus, Peter and Paul, all say that this verse is talking about John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:1-3 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Isaiah 40:4 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:

It is apparent that these geographical features symbolize the arid lifelessness of lost sinful unconverted souls. The hills represent the carnal pride of the sinner, the valleys his moods of carnal hopelessness and self-pity.

In short, the meaning is that Judah should prepare their hearts for the coming Messiah the manifestation of God and their deliverance ...

The figure of leveling and preparing literal roads is taken from the practice of some ancient rulers who actually required such preparation when they traveled to distant places.

Despite the obvious primary application of this passage to the return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, "At the same time it is clear that the prophet was inspired to use language of a special design that should also appropriately express an even more important event, the coming of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, and the work he would perform as preparatory to the first coming of Christ.

We have the irrefutable authority of John the Baptist and of our blessed Savior that these verses apply to the introduction of the Gospel and the kingdom of Christ, who was to effect a much greater deliverance of God's people, Jews and Gentiles alike, from the captivity of sin and the dominion of death

Matthew 3:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Mark 1:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Luke 3:4-6 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be

filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways [shall be] made smooth; 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

John 1:23 He said, I [am] the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

There were 3 groups of Jews in the 2 century BC through the 1st century AD. The Sadducees, the blue bloods, old money controllers of the Temple enterprise. The Pharisees supposed representatives of the people. The 3rd group the Essenes. They state in their Damascus Document they went out to the wilderness to do precisely what Isaiah called for here. More than likely John the Baptist came out from this group as a holy prophet calling the dredges of society to repent. The Essenes used similar language and metaphors as Christians. This mystery group never mentioned recognizable people. They had a “Teacher of Righteousness”, a “wicked Priest”, “the man of a lie” who rebuked “the works of the law” a Pauline term “before the whole congregation” John the Baptist was raised in the desert.

Luke 1:80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

The “Son’s of Light” is a Dead Sea term used extensively in the New Testament about Christians. Cf:

Luke 16:8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Other uses of this term are: John 12:36, Eph. 5:8 and I Thess. 5:5

4Q 521 has a verbal parallel with Matthew 11

Other Qumran Dead Sea terms commonly found in Christianity are: The Way, The Congregation, Living Water, The Holy Spirit, The Son of

God, they Practiced Baptism daily, Believed in a fiery Judgment, They believed in Pre-destination X 1,000, more than any super Calvinist today, and definitely separated themselves from all sinners.

It is quite remarkable that John shows up 5 miles down the road baptizing in the Jordan the dredges of society that the Essenes hated ... all within eyesight of Qumran.

It seems to me that some of these Zealots were killed by the Romans and the rest had already converted becoming in my opinion legalistic Judaizing Christians ... of the stripe Paul had so much trouble with ...

Isaiah 40:5 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].

John 1:1 & 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Isaiah 40:6-8 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: 7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people [is] grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The big point in this paragraph is the last clause. It points to the only dependable and certain anchor namely, the word of the God.

Both Peter and James quoted from this passage (1 Peter 1:24-25 & James 1:10-11), bringing to six the New Testament authors who quoted from this chapter, four of them ascribing the passage to Isaiah. No Christian should dare to ascribe it to anyone else!

Isaiah 40:9 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!

What is the message of the Messenger to be? ... “Behold” the Messiah is “your God”.

Isaiah 40:10 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.

This earmarks this chapter as having been written by Isaiah just as clearly as if he had signed it a half dozen times.

Isaiah 40:11 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.

The Messiah is to come under the metaphor of a loving shepherd.

John 10:14 I am the good shepherd, and know my [sheep], and am known of mine.

The Greatness of God vs man, each question can be answered no man

Isaiah 40:12-17 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? 13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or [being] his counsellor hath taught him? 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] 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 And Lebanon [is] not sufficient to burn,

nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. 17 All nations before him [are] as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

There is a series of rhetorical questions here, every one of which requires the answer: "No one." Kelley commented that the use of such questions, "was a favorite literary device of this prophet."

The apostle Paul quoted from Isaiah 40:13 in Romans 11:34. One of the unusual metaphors here is in Isaiah 40:16 where it is declared that the whole forest of Lebanon for the fire and all of the beasts thereof for the burnt-offering would not be sufficient to provide a single sacrifice for such a great God as the LORD!

"The nations ..." means all of the nations on earth taken together.

Isaiah here emphasizes all of this by speaking of the manner in which idols are manufactured. As objects of worship, idols are "nothing," indeed "less than nothing.

Isaiah 40:18-26 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 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.

The first few verses here speak of the utter foolishness of idolatry. Idols simply cannot be compared to God. An idol is not even a person, it cannot see, it cannot think, it cannot hear, it cannot move, it cannot feel, it cannot "know" anything, it cannot move, it cannot "do" anything! How, then could it remotely remind anyone of God?

Isaiah 40:21 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?

This refers to the basic knowledge that has been handed down to successive generations of the human race concerning God's creation of the world and related truth.

Isaiah 40:22 [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:

"He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth..." Certainly the passage is compatible with the fact of the earth's being round or a sphere.

"heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in"

Here is another scientific fact, utterly unknown in Isaiah's day, but apparent to us in the words which God delivered through Isaiah to mankind. Are the atmospheric heavens indeed a curtain and a tent? Assuredly! Take a look at detailed photographs of the moon, where there is no atmosphere (heavens) like that which protects the earth, and it will be at once apparent what God's "curtain, or tent" has done for our earth. That curtain, composed of earth's atmosphere, traps and destroys millions of meteorites which otherwise would long ago have destroyed our world without God's "heavens" spread out like a curtain or a tent to dwell in!

"grasshoppers" Such an omnipotent, omniscient God could indeed behold the inhabitants of the earth as "grasshoppers."

Isaiah 40:23-24 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. 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.

The mention here of princes that "shall not be planted" suggests that great men do not have the stability and permanence of a tree.

All men, even the great ones, are "here today and gone tomorrow"!

Isaiah 40:25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. 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.

How can such a great God be compared, or "likened" to anything on earth? Even the starry hosts of heaven are deployed and commanded by God's authority. He made them; and he has a definite plan for every single one of them; and he even calls every one of the billions of trillions of stars by their names! Feeble, mortal, men do not have the slightest idea of how many stars there actually are.

Isaiah 40:27-30 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? 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. 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to [them that have] no might he increaseth strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.

As a matter of truth, the Jews fared very well in Babylon; and the vast majority of them found it so good there that they even refused to go back to Jerusalem when the opportunity finally came. Remember, it was only a "remnant," and a very pitifully small one, that returned.

Of course, Isaiah designed these words to be of special comfort to Israel during the captivity who had prophesied in the preceding chapter; and the big admonition here is that Israel should stabilize and comfort herself by leaning "Upon God, (1) the everlasting; (2) the Creator; (3) the unwearied; and (4) the unsearchable."

Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew (Hebrew exchange) [their] strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; [and] they shall walk, and not faint.

The word "wait" (Isaiah 40:31) is of unusual interest. The basic word from which `wait' is derived means 'to wind' or 'to twist,' the word 'rope' being a noun that comes from this term. The meaning here is that the believer should let the Lord be his lifeline, his cord of escape.

The man of faith may sometimes soar on eagles' wings: he'll catch an air current and float on the wind naturally, barely moving his wings despite his great bulk ... to have "wings as eagles" means God will lock our wings in the "climb" position: effortlessly flying upward ... while a humming bird flaps his wings hundreds of times a minute just to stay airborne.

The real test of his faith comes, not when he flies or runs, but when he must walk ... just plod along.

'wait upon the LORD' is another favorite expression of Isaiah.

put forth fresh feathers the eagle lives and retains his vigor to a great age some 50-70 years far beyond the lot of other birds, he mounts in his old age, and renews his feathers, and with them his youth.

Psalms 103:5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good [things; so that] thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Sources: KJV Bible, theWord.com, Burton Coffman, BW Johnson, Adam Clark, FF Bruce, McKnight and JW McGarvey, Narrow Path