

Introduction

The Bible is truly an incredible book. The more you read it and understand it, the more it opens up to you. Everything in the Bible is connected! I recently listened to a podcast with a couple of Bible scholars talking about the theme of trees in the Bible. Perhaps you may think that either that podcast couldn't have been very long or it couldn't have been very interesting. But the fact is, when you begin to see the richness of God's word, there is glory and beauty to be seen from so many different angles, even trees.

While all this is wonderful, we must never forget that these glorious aspects of the Bible should lead our affections to God. The Bible is about all sorts of things, but it is chiefly a book about God. And the prophecy of Isaiah is one of the foremost examples of this reality in the Bible. When you read through Isaiah, it is easy to get lost in all the incredible imagery and allusions. But Isaiah's prophecy is ultimately about God.

[Isaiah 40](#) exemplifies this because it focuses on three aspects of God's character: God's glory, God's Word, and God's power.

We will see each of these from our passage which breaks down into four parts:

1. Verses 1-2 present the commissioning of the herald.
2. Verses 3-5 present the Glory of the Lord.
3. Verses 6-8 present the Word of the Lord.
4. Verses 9-11 present the Power of the Lord

The Commissioning of Herald (vv. 1-2)

Back in [Isaiah 6](#) we see the first commissioning of Isaiah to prophetic ministry. Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up in the temple and he is undone by the holiness of God and laments his own unholiness. But God cleanses Isaiah and then asks the question: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah

responds to this question by saying, “Here I am! Send me.” ([Is. 6:8](#)). Isaiah is then given his marching orders from God and they are pretty bleak. Isaiah is commissioned with a message of judgement.

Isaiah feels the weight of his message and asks *how long he must declare his message of doom*. God answers Isaiah, “Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.” ([Is. 6:11-12](#)).

For the next the next 33 chapters of his prophecy Isaiah does just what he is commanded. He declares God’s coming judgement until the cities lay waste. In [Isaiah 39](#), Isaiah tells King Hezekiah that Babylon will come and destroy Jerusalem and Judah. As we come to [Isaiah 40](#), this prophecy has taken place. Jerusalem has been destroyed and God’s people have been taken off into exile.

But now God comes to His prophet and commissions *a new word for His people*. No sooner have God’s people been carried off into exile than God declares words of “comfort” over his people.

These words of comfort in verse 1 frame the next 27 chapters of Isaiah’s prophecy. *God’s judgement has now passed and restoration is the new order of business*. God’s people have died the death of exile and resurrection is now promised.

In verse 2, the prophet is told to speak new words to God’s people, no longer is it a message of judgement, but now it is a message of hope. God tells His prophet, **“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.”**

God’s people are now to hear words of comfort and pardon from God. What’s more, they are to understand the calamity that came upon them in the proper light. The very end of verse 2 states, **“that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.”**

When Judah and Jerusalem were laid desolate at the hands of Babylon, it was not *ultimately* due to the strength and power of Babylon. No, it was because the LORD’s hand had brought it about.

It is good to always be reminded of this fact. God is sovereign. He is the one who brings peace and calamity. Yes, He uses means. Babylon really did destroy Jerusalem. But ultimately it was from the hand of God. Let this serve as a comfort to you. Even when God's people go through their darkest days, they are still under God's hand. God may discipline you, but He has not abandoned you.

This is what Isaiah says to Jerusalem, and it is what the LORD says to you this morning.

The Glory of the Lord (vv. 3-5)

According to verse 2, Isaiah has a new commissioning from the LORD. But on what grounds can God's people gain hope from these words? The answer is found in verses 3-5. The reason why God's people can be comforted is because God is going to come and visit them and reveal His glory.

Verses 3-4 are familiar verses to many. They are taken up by the gospel writers to describe the ministry of John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the Lord Jesus. The image given here is that of God's presence on Mount Sinai in the wilderness. The LORD is roused from His holy mountain and is now coming to rescue His people from their distress. It doesn't matter what sort of obstacles lie in His way. "***Mountains will be brought low, uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.***"

God will come to His people from the wilderness. Judah and Jerusalem were made into a wilderness because of God's judgement. But all will be transformed and restored when God comes from the wilderness.

The rationale for this is found in verse 5, God is going to reveal His glory to all flesh. As the prophet Habakkuk declared, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." ([Hab 2:14](#)).

The glory of God is the absolute center of all reality. When man attempts to scorn God's glory and claim glory for himself, he is brought low. However, when man humbles himself under the glory of God, God reveals His own glory and we are transformed from one degree of glory to another. ([2 Cor 3:18](#))

You are made for glory. But if you pursue glory apart from God, you will be like the mountains that stand in God's way, you will be brought low. But if you

humble yourself before God, you will be raised up. This is the pattern Jesus shows us. He humbled Himself and he was raised up ([Phil 2:5-11](#)). As the Apostle James wrote, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” ([James 4:10](#))

The section ends by stating, “***The mouth of the LORD has spoken.***” Which leads us to our next section.

The Word of the Lord (vv. 6-8)

At the end of the day, there is nothing more trustworthy than God’s Word!

In verse 6 the prophet is told to “***Cry!***” and Isaiah responds, “***What shall I cry?***” and these are the words Isaiah is given to cry: “***All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.***”

Flesh here represents the transience and moral bankruptcy of humanity. No matter how high a man or a kingdom is, it falls before the breath of the LORD. Just as Nebuchadnezzar himself looked out over his mighty empire and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” ([Dan 4:30](#)). No sooner were the words in his mouth than a voice from heaven declared,

[Daniel 4:31-32](#) (ESV)

³¹ “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, ³² and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox... until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.”

It is the breath of God that brings life:

Psalm 104:30 **ESV**

³⁰ When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

And it is also the breath of God that brings death:

Psalm 90:5-6 ESV

⁵ You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: ⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

Isaiah tells God's people they have a firm foundation in God's Word. This admonition remains for you today. Establish yourself firmly in God's Word. As the Apostle Peter wrote, "We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place," ([2 Peter 1:19](#))

The Power of the Lord (vv. 9-11)

God's Word is all powerful and He is going to come to His people. God's people should be fully assured of this. In the final verses, Isaiah lays out in detail what it will look like when God shows up in His glory and displays His power.

An important transition that takes place in verse 9. Zion and Jerusalem are now named "**heralds of good news**". Back in verse 2, the prophet was speaking words of comfort to Jerusalem, now Jerusalem itself is the herald of good news.

There is a trajectory to God's restoration. When God saves His people, they are to become heralds of that salvation to others. The story of the Samaritan woman is an example of this. Jesus offers her the waters of eternal life. When the woman left Jesus and went back into to town she became a herald of good news. [John 4:39](#) puts it this way "Many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony." As God has brought His salvation and restoration to you, you are to become an ambassador of that good news to others.

What will you tell others that God has done? The final two verses of our passage that highlight what God's salvation looks like.

First, when God comes to His people He will come in might. He will defeat their enemies and deliver His people with his mighty arm. But, secondly, the same arm that defeats the enemies of God's people is also the arm that will gather up His people and carry them gently in His bosom. God's power is on display here but so are His tender mercies.

Each one of you likely has a tendency to view God in one of these forms while minimizing the other. Most men in the room this morning are likely invigorated by the mighty power of God. The Bible calls God a man of war, and so He is. Most ladies in the room this morning are likely drawn to the loving compassion and tender mercies of God. God is like a gentle shepherd who cares for His sheep.

God created both the lion and the bunny rabbit, and both animals reflect His glory. Jesus, the God man, demonstrates this too. He tells His disciples to let the children come to Him and He also drives out the money changers from the Temple.

Do not let your vision of God become truncated. He is a mighty warrior and a tender shepherd. Let His Word shape your thoughts toward Him. As you do, you will find that He is beyond all that you could ask or imagine.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!