

Fall Feasts of Israel

Lesson 3: Consolation #1 (Isaiah 40:1-26)

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September 15

“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the **Consolation of Israel**, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple.

And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
For my eyes have seen Your salvation
Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.’”

- Luke 2:25-32 NKJV

Introduction to the Seven of Consolation passages

Each year, as preparation for the fall feasts, a series of seven passages are read from Isaiah 40-66. They are called the **Seven of Consolation**.

Their overall message/purpose

- Comfort a people in exile
- Prompt self-examination and repentance

Their imagery and themes

- The order of the passages reflects a conversation between God and His people echoing the Song of Solomon in its theme of love.
- The Consolations' imagery dwells heavily on reversals of condition, as a way of prompting a heart toward "teshuvah" (returning to God or repentance).
- The harlot and adulteress imagery now moves into the picture of women in need of consolation which include widow, women who are barren or have lost children, women with broken marriage covenants, and the virgin of Israel in disgrace.
- The Bridegroom imagery now turns toward a Messiah figure as the Servant (Suffering Servant), the Arm of the Lord, the Glory of the Lord, and the Light to Gentiles
- Harvest: the physical harvest parallels the spiritual judgment, and looks toward a time of feasting and plenty.

The Seven of Consolation: The Way

Isaiah 40 (Consolation #1): *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

Isaiah 62 (Consolation #7) *"Go through, Go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; Build up, build up the highway! Take out the stones, lift up a banner for the peoples." - Isaiah 62:10-11 NKJV*

Inclusio: a repeated phrase that marks the beginning and end of a selection of verses and indicates these verses contain a specific message or picture.

The series begins and ends with the reference "preparing a way." Housed within this theme is this command:

"... Prepare the way, take the stumbling block out of the way of My people." - Isaiah 57:14

There are two aspects to "the Way" :

1. The way God has made for atonement and reconciliation through the Messiah.

*"Jesus said to him, '**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**'" - John 14:6*

2. The way that we walk as believers in pursuing peace with one another and with God. Because we are prone to stumble as a result of our inherent sin condition, we are called to the continual exercise of self-examination, confession, and repentance.

Stumbling blocks in the way bring us to a standstill in our walk, keep us from living at peace with each other and with God, and can derail us from the path altogether.

The Seven of Consolation: The Way

Jesus is a stumbling stone to unbelievers, but a comfort to believers.

“Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. - 1 Peter 2:7-8

*“ . . . Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”
- Romans 9:32-33*

John 14-16

In John 14: He gives them the promises of help and comfort

- Promise of the kingdom to come (14:2-3)
- *“I am the Way . . .”* (14:6)
- Promise of answered prayer (14:12-14)
- Promise of the coming Helper (14:15-17, 26)
- Promise of peace (14:27)

John 15:1-17 Walk in the way: abide in Me, keep my commandments

John 15:18 – 16:4: The world will hate, judge, and kill you.

John 16:8-11: the Holy Spirit will convict and judge the world

John 16:16-33:

- The return (v16-19)
- Sorrow turned to joy (20-24)
- *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* (v33)

Isaiah 45: The Mashiach

The destruction of the Temple on Tisha B'Av began a time of exile for the Jewish people – the Babylonian captivity.

Their Babylonian exile ended with Cyrus the Great of Persia allowing them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Isaiah 45 speaks of Cyrus.

"Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: 'I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.' . . . I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward," says the LORD of hosts." - Isaiah 45:1-2, 13

Cyrus is a “mashiach” or messiah – anointed one

- A title only applied to Israel’s kings and priests
- He is the only Gentile ever given this honor in Scripture.
- He is a type of Messiah associated with “preparing the way” for Israel’s return. Israel cannot return without a Messiah facilitating the way.

How does the Messiah in Isaiah 45 prepare the way?

- **Subdues the nations, opens the gates** (Isaiah 45:1)
- **Builds the city** (Isaiah 45:13)
Specifically the Temple (Ezra 1:2-4)
- **Sets the captives free** (Isaiah 45:13)
“Go up and build” (Ezra 1:3) He deploys the people
- **Makes the crooked places straight**
(compare with Lamentations 3:9, 42:16, Isaiah 40:4)

Isaiah 40:1-26 The Messenger

Is the Mashiach the Messenger? Or Does the Messenger announce the LORD or the Mashiach?



God prepares the way for the Mashiach



Mashiach prepares the way & deploys the people

Read Isaiah 40:1-5

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’” - Isaiah 40:3-5

“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,’ says the LORD of hosts.” - Malachi 3:1

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” - Malachi 4:5-6

The Messenger: John the Baptist

He comes with a message: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”* - Matthew 3:2

He comes with the practice of immersing people in water as an act of repentance (teshuvah):

“Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.” - Matthew 3:5-6 NKJV

“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,” - Luke 3:3 (cf Mark 1:4)

He comes with a rebuke to the unrepentant:

“Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? . . . Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, . . . And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” - Matthew 3:8, 10

He speaks of a greater One who is coming:

“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” - Matthew 3:12

Who is he?

“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not,” - Luke 3:15

“Are you the Christ? Are you Elijah? Are you the Prophet? . . . Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet?”
John 1:19-25

Consolation #1: Picture of Christ

“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” - Deut 8:3

“You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah.” Deut. 6:16

“So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land . . . beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.”- Deut 6:10-13

“Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; . . . All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.” - Isaiah 40:15-17

“Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’” Matthew 4:3-4

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down’. . . Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God.”’” Matthew 4:5-7

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.”’” Matthew 4:8-10

Consolation #1: Isaiah 40:1-26

Haftarah (Prophets):

Isaiah 40:1-26

Torah (Law):

Deut. 3:23-7:11

(Deut 6:10-16)

NT portion:

John 14-16

Matthew 3:1-12

Matthew 4:1-11

Matthew 6:30-33

Rev 22:12-17

Psalm 23

Verses 6-8, 24: Consider your own mortality. Life is transient. This world is transient. Even our relationships with other people are transient.

Verses 9-26: Consider God's eternity – omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. Who is His likeness; who is His equal? Our relationship with Him is permanent.

- Is it comforting to consider our own mortality?
- Where do you look for comfort?
- Are the comforts you seek temporary and shallow or do they offer lasting reassurance?
- Compare with **Matthew 6:30-33**. What understanding does Jesus add to this idea?

Stumbling Block: Pursuing Comfort in Transient Things (leads to worry)

- Why is this view of God necessary for understanding “the way”?
- The consolations are meant to comfort a woman who has lost a relationship with her husband. What consolation might she take from this view of God?

Consolation #1: Isaiah 40:1-26

Haftarah (Prophets):

Isaiah 40:1-26

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’” - Isaiah 40:3-5

Torah (Law):

Deut. 3:23-7:11

(Deut 6:10-16)

Making a physical highway

- High hills being brought low
- Valleys being raised
- Crooked places made straight
- Rough places made smooth

Making a spiritual “way”

- The arrogant being humbled
- The humble being lifted up
- Crooked practices brought to justice
- Refining, removing stumbling blocks

NT portion:

John 14-16

Matthew 3:1-12

Matthew 4:1-11

Matthew 6:30-33

Rev 22:12-17

Psalm 23

*“The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.”
- Isaiah 59:8 NKJV*

Consolation #1: Isaiah 40:1-26

Haftarah (Prophets):

Isaiah 40:1-26

"Scarcely shall they be planted, scarcely shall they be sown, scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, when He will also blow on them, and they will wither, and the whirlwind will take them away like stubble." Isaiah 40:24

Torah (Law):

Deut. 3:23-7:11

(Deut 6:10-16)

"And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'" - Jonah 4:5-8

NT portion:

John 14-16

Matthew 3:1-12

Matthew 4:1-11

Matthew 6:30-33

Rev 22:12-17

Jonah sought comfort in the vine-covered booth—a transient comfort—and he is angry with God for taking away that comfort.

Psalm 23

The book of Jonah is read on the Day of Atonement.

Stumbling Blocks

“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” - Romans 14:17-19

Learn to discern between what is transient and what is eternal in its benefits.

Learn to discern what earthly practices have spiritual implications.