

The Book of Isaiah

Chapter 40

Comforting Words to the People of God, Israel

As has been discussed in the introduction this chapter marks the great division of the book. This division is so notable that liberal scholars believe a different "Isaiah" wrote chapters 40-66. This heresy is discussed in Appendix C and is brought to not by the words of our Lord in where He quotes from both portions of Isaiah but attributes them to one person, Esaias (Isaiah):

"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 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? Therefore, they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 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. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." (Joh 12:37-41)

Isaiah 40 -66 can be outlined like the following:

40-48 The **Greatness** of God compared to the vanity of man's idols.

49-57 The **Grace** of God manifested in His Son.

58-66 The **Glory** of God revealed in the kingdom of His Son.

Comforting Words for God's People (1-11): This chapter sets the tone for the whole chapter and ultimately the rest of Isaiah.

(vss. 1-2) The "comfort" is to Jerusalem. The comforting words are that the "warfare" and "iniquity" against Jerusalem and ultimately God's people are over. It is looking at a time when all her punishments have been delt out. The "city of Peace" will experience finally be

The Pardon of God's People: Israel sinfulness will be pardoned, and her troubles will be over at the end of the tribulation (**Jer. 31:31-34; 50:20; Ezek. 36:24-28; Heb. 8:10-12**).

The Payment for Her Sins: Israel's history is one of suffering for her sins. Truly she has reaped according to **Leviticus 26:14-46**.

(vs. 3) John the Baptist, the Voice in the wilderness. The book of Matthew makes this clear this passage is fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist note the two passages compared:

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. (Isa 40:3)

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, (Mt 3:1)

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.** (Mt 3:3)

And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, **I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.** (Joh 1:21-23)

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. **And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.** (Lu 1:13-17)

(vss. 4-5) Making Straight the Way of the Lord: I understand this to mean that John the Baptist roll is to make "straight the way of the Lord" by "making ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Thus, Isaiah describes this "straightening" in poetic verbiage:

Valley shall be exalted - Lowly and humble shall be exalted

Mountain and hill made low - Proudful in heart shall be abased

Crooked made straight – Those that are of a crooked spirit, and walk in crooked ways, with the workers of iniquity, shall be directed to right ways, and be led in the straight and narrow path of righteousness.

Rough places made plain – Whatever obstructions were in the way of embracing Christ as Messiah through John the Baptist ministry would be removed.

(vss. 6-8) The Cry of the Voice in the Wilderness (a continuation of making and preparing a people to receive their Messiah)

(vs. 6) All flesh is Grass

(vs. 7, 8) The Grass withereth

(vs. 6) Goodness of the grass is as the flower of the field

(vs. 7, 8) The flower fadeth

(vs. 8) But the word of our God shall stand for ever

(vss. 9-11) Behold Your God: This is a prophetic utterance Zion, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah to “be not afraid” for “behold your God!” (vs. 9). This prophetic utterance is comforting words to His people. He will come with “strong hand and his arm shall rule for him” and “his reward is with him and his work before him” (vs. 10).

For the LORD shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. (Isa 51:3-5)

And, behold, I come quickly; and **my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.** (Re 22:12)

The Greatness of God (vss. 12-17): The haughtiness of man will demand God to put him in his place as in Job 38-42.

All Mighty in Scope (vs. 12)

All Mighty in Knowledge (vss. 13-14)

All Mighty in Strength (vss. 15-18)

The Insignificance of Idols (vss. 18-27): The sin that does so easily beset Israel has always been idol worship. God warned the nation:

And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee. (De 7:16)

Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. (Jg 2:3)

They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. (Ps 106:34-39)

(vss. 18 cf. 25) To whom can you liken God? What image can be likened to God? The second member of the Godhead is the closest we will ever get:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Heb 1:1-3)

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I

been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? (Joh 14:6-9)

(vs. 19) The rich man's idol.

(vs. 20) The poor man's idol.

(vss. 21) Psalm 19:1-3. The heavens declare the glory of God therefore all mankind is accountable for a knowledge of Him.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. (Ro 1:19-25)

(vs. 22) While this is metaphorical it also gives insight into how God created the heavens and their purpose.

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: (Isa 40:22)

The truth of this passage and a host of others would fall under the classification of **Biblical Astrology**. It would help understand such things as why "darkness was upon the face of the deep" and why God created the sun moon and stars. Not to mention why God created the earth in the first place. (See Appendix P).

(vs. 23-24, 26) The Lord is allowing the princes and judges of this world have their "day" however there is an end to their rule, for the Lord will have His "day" the "day of the Lord". Notice these references are to Israel (vs. 27).

(vs. 26) Once again Biblical Astrology is in view. The host is the heavenly body and their constellations.

He **telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.** Great is our Lord, and of great power: **his understanding is infinite.** (Ps 147:4-5)

The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. Canst thou bind the **sweet influences of Pleiades,** or **loose the bands of Orion?** Canst thou bring forth **Mazzaroth in his season?** or canst thou guide **Arcturus with his sons?** Knowest thou the **ordinances of heaven?** canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? (Job 38:30-33)

* Pleiades is a star cluster in the constellation of Taurus. The stars are bound together by mutual gravitational attraction. – Sweet influence

* The Bands of Orion are the three stars that make up Orion's belt or band.

* Mazzaroth is the constellation signs, the Zodiac. The path the sun takes through the heavens is the Zodiac (meaning path or way).

The Everlasting Strength of God (28-31): The Lord does not grow weary, nor is His understanding limited:

“Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” (Ps 147:5).

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Ro 11:33-36)

(vs. 29) All throughout the bible it is God that giveth strength. David through the Psalms praise God for giving him strength:

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I

praise him. The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever. (Ps 28:7-9)

(vs. 31) This is a prophetic reference to the Remnant in the Tribulation Period:

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. (Re 12:14)

The Book of Isaiah

Chapter 41

Comforting Words to the People of God, Israel

God is challenging the gods, the idols of mans inventions.

(vs. 1) God is calling the “islands”, the Gentile people both near and beyond the seas to come together to judgment, judging between God and the gods of the lands.

God’s Sovereignty in Choosing Israel (2-20): The challenge is seen in the three “who’s” throughout this chapter (vss. 2, 4, 26). **The challenge: Who is it that called the “righteous man from the east”** – Answer, God. He called Abram from the land of the Chaldeans (vs. 9 cf. Gen. 12:1-4; 15:1-7).

The argumentative case is made in vs. 4 “**Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?”** Answer – “**I the LORD the first and with the last; I am he¹.**”

Those from the “isles” saw it and feared, they were “afraid” (vs. 5) so they banded together (vs. 6) and made idols to encourage them (vs.7).

However, this is to no travail, for God is the one that chose the seed of Abraham, His friend² (vs. 8-9). God is the One who called them into the land, the land of Canaan, the land of their inheritance.

Therefore, since God is the One that called Israel and formed Israel, they have nothing to fear, for God will “strengthen” them, “help” them and “uphold” (vss. 10, 13-16). And all those that are “incensed against thee shall be as nothing; and those that strive with thee shall perish” (vss. 11-12).

For “Behold” God will make Israel a “new sharp threshing instrument” able to subdue her enemies. It will be at that time Israel shall “**rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.**” (vss. 15-16). For when Israel finds herself in utter calamity then

¹ See Isaiah 44:6-8

² James 2:23

the LORD will **“hear them”** He will **“not forsake them”** (vs. 17). He will revitalize the land and plant Israel in it forever (vss. 18-19).

Then all the islands **“shall see and know and consider and understand together that the hand of the LORD hath done this and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”** (vs. 20).

God’s Challenge to the Heathen (21-29): The challenge to the heathen nations is **“Produce your cause...bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.”** (vs. 21).

Can any heathen nations or god **“shew what shall happen...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.”** (vs. 22). Or can they **“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.** (vs. 23)

The Answer: **Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.** (vs. 24)

Then as in vs. 25 the Lord shews things to come **“hereafter”**. This verse is none other than a veiled reference to King Cyrus who God will bring forth to make the decree for the Jewish people to return from Babylonian captivity. (See **Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-2**)

From the perspective of Jerusalem Cyrus will come from the Northeast. Even the issue of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem is hinted at, for he shall come upon princes as **“mortar”** and as **“clay”**³.

The final challenging words of **“who”** to the heathen and their idols is **“Who hath declared from the beginning that we may know?”** (vs. 26) - There is none among the soothsayers, and the worshippers of idols, who has predicted the birth, the character, and the conquests of Cyrus. There is among the pagan no recorded prediction on the subject, as there is among the Jews concerning King Cyrus.

The **“first”** is a reference to **“the first and with the last”** cf. 4. It is the LORD that will give the conclusion of the whole matter.

The conclusion of the matter is that NO idol or god can answer Gods challenges. Their response is like that of Job (Job 40:3-5); they answered not a word: **“For I beheld, and**

³ Ezra 1

there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word." (vs. 28)

Therefore: "Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion." (vs. 29)

Appendix Q

A Brief History of Israel's Idolatry

Idolatry began before the calling of Abram for Terah, Abram's father was a worshiper of other gods. Joshua said, "... unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, **Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. (Jos 24:2).** Rachel, Jacob's wife, stole her uncle's household gods in their escape back to Canaan. (**Gen.31:30-35**). Jacob later ordered his family to get rid of their household gods (**Gen.35:2**). Thus, idolatry was practiced in the families of the patriarchs even before their time in the land of Ham, Egypt.

As the time of Israel's deliverance drew near God laid judgments against all the gods of Egypt, "**For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.**" (Ex 12:12)

However, God's people quickly turned back to their idolatrous worship:

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (Ex 32:1-4)

The prophet Ezekiel gives a historical synopsis of Israel's Idolatry beginning with their time in the land of Egypt.

Idolatry in Egypt (Ezekiel 20:5-9):

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the LORD your God; In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands: Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am

the LORD your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. (Eze 20:5-9)

Idolatry in the wilderness (Ezekiel 20:10-17):

Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. (Eze 20:10-17)

Idolatry of the Wilderness Children (Ezekiel 20:18-26):

But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should

not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the LORD. (Eze 20:18-26)

Idolatry of the Canaan Generation (Ezekiel 20:27-29):

Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings. Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. (Eze 20:27-29)

Idolatry in Ezekiel's Generation (Ezekiel 20:30-32):

Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. (Eze 20:30-32)

It is this historical account of Israel's idolatry that Stephen in his message to the nation accuses them of:

He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the

wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. (Ac 7:36-43).