

Awaiting Advent: The Promises before the Manger – Week 1 – Isaiah 40:1-8, Luke 1:8-17, John 1:6-9

Isaiah 40:1-8:

*Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.*

² *Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.*

³ *A voice of one calling:
"In the wilderness prepare
the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.*

⁴ *Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.*

⁵ *And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

⁶ *A voice says, "Cry out."
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
"All people are like grass,
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.*

⁷ *The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the Lord blows on them.
Surely the people are grass.*

⁸ *The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever."*

INTRO to series—**Awaiting Advent: The Promises before the Manger:** Long before that silent night in Bethlehem, the Lord was already writing the story of our Savior's birth. God had promised the Advent, or "arrival," of a just and righteous King who would reign forever. Generation after generation waited and watched. They looked for this Messiah King who would bring light into their darkness, peace into their turmoil, and hope into their hearts. This Advent, we'll follow that story—from the ancient promises of the Old Testament to their beautiful fulfillment in Jesus. We'll see Him as the true Light shining in the darkness, the Shepherd who leads us with love, and the King whose glory reaches to the ends of the earth. Jesus is our Immanuel—"God with us."

INTRO to **Isaiah 40:1-8:** Chapter 40 represents is a "hinge" chapter in the Book of Isaiah, where God's message to His people swings from words of judgment to words of

forgiveness and restoration in preparation for the promise of the coming Redeemer—the Messiah King. Today we also look at Isaiah 40's fulfillment in the birth of John the Baptist just a few months before the birth of Jesus and consider how we also can prepare the way for the Messiah when He returns.

I. God promised to make a way for His people to be forgiven and restored. (Isaiah 40:1-2)

-Before this many parts of Isaiah have been “See, See, your sins have been exposed including among your leaders...,” or “Hear, Hear, the Lord’s judgment is coming...”

-NOW, this Chapter begins in **vs. 1** with words from the Lord in a gracious and forgiving tone: *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

-AND then—**vs. 2:** *Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,*

-Despite our sin, God promised He would make a way for us to be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with Him.

II. God called for someone to prepare the way for the Redeemer who would set everything wrong to right. (Isaiah 40:3-8, Luke 1:8-17, John 1:6-9)

-Israel and Judah were going to experience just consequences for their sin, but they were also to be preparing for a coming Redeemer – the Messiah King – who would not only deliver them but also set all things that are wrong to right.

-God not only has the power to deliver and redeem His people; it is His desire to do so because He loves them! **Isaiah 40** is a promise to God’s people that He will be with them through the very dark season that was upcoming in their lives, and see them through by fulfilling His promises to them for His Kingdom and for their good.

-Though they would face a long season of waiting and longing for deliverance, God’s people were to remember the HOPE of these promises being fulfilled:

- *Every valley shall be raised up*
- *Every mountain and hill made low*
- *The rough ground shall become level*
- *The rugged places a plain*
- *And the glory of the Lord will be revealed*
- *And all people will see it together*

-Though God did protect and restore His people in part after a long season of captivity in Babylon, it wasn't until 700 years after Isaiah that the promised Redeemer finally came to Earth when Jesus Christ was born.

-In **Luke 1** (see below), we also see the fulfillment of Isaiah's promise of the one who would be *"A voice of one calling:*

*"In the wilderness prepare
the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God."* (**Isaiah 40:3**)

-The one who would prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah, would be named John (the Baptist) – the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel told Zechariah that his son John would be God's messenger to testify about the true Light of the world—Jesus—who was coming to set people free from their sins and to raise us from spiritual death to life in His Name (see **John 1:6-9** below).

-This was a true promise of HOPE from the Lord—the greatest HOPE there is—that God would come to us in order to make a way for us to come to Him!

-As the Lord had reminded His people in **Isaiah 40**: *For the mouth of the Lord has spoken...the word of our God endures forever."*

-The call of believers today is to prepare the way for the Messiah's return. We give thanks for the first Advent—Jesus Christ has already come into the world to bring us salvation—but there is a second Advent yet to come—Christ is coming back again. May we be faithful as followers of Jesus, to proclaim in every place that God sends us—the Good News of Jesus Christ – the Light of the World – *the rising sun [who came] to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."* (see Zechariah's *Benedictus* in **Luke 1:76-79** below)

Other Scriptures Referenced:

Luke 1:8-17: *Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.*

¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. ¹⁶ He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power

of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Luke 1:76-79: *And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,*

⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation

through the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,

by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness

and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

John 1:6-9: *There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.*

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

Other Quotes/Resources:

-“The Bible is a book about Jesus. In the Old Testament, He is predicted; in the Gospels, He is revealed; in Acts, He is preached; in the Epistles, He is explained; and in the book of Revelation, He is expected.” –Alistair Begg

-“The great theme of Advent is hope, but it is not tolerable to speak of hope unless we are willing to look squarely at the overwhelming presence of evil in our world.” –Fleming Rutledge