

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part LVIII: God's Greatness Seen In His Future Release Of Israel From A Long, Harsh Captivity (Isaiah 40:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. Though Isaiah 1-39 emphasizes God's judgment, Isaiah 40-66 focuses on His deliverances and restoration regarding (1) the Babylonian Captivity, (2) the rejection and restoration of the Suffering Servant, the Messiah and (3) God's restoration of Israel and the world for the Messianic Kingdom, Bib. Know. Com., O. T., p. 1091.
- B. Isaiah 40:1-11 deals with God's restoring Israel from the Babylonian Captivity, and since Isaiah did not know about the Church era between Messiah's arrival and the Kingdom (cf. Ephesians 3:1-8), he combined his predictions about Israel's restoration to the land with Messiah's arrival and the start of the Messianic Kingdom.
- C. Accordingly, we view Isaiah 40:1-11 for appropriate applications to our era (as follows):

II. God's Greatness Seen In His Future Release Of Israel From A Long, Harsh Captivity, Isaiah 40:1-11.

- A. In an effort to emphasize the desire of God to comfort His people from all the hardships of her captivity, the prophet Isaiah repeated the verb "comfort" for emphasis (Isaiah 40:1), and then stated it a third time (v. 2) with the call that God's prophet emphasize the fact that she has been fully punished for her sins.
- B. Consequently, Judah's captivity was about to end, with the nation returning from Babylon to the land of Israel, so the prophet called to Judah's people to prepare the way for the Lord, to make straight in the desert a highway for their God toward His leading His people back from Babylon to the land of Judah, Isaiah 40:3.
- C. In the process, the prophet called for a leveling of the terrain to make the passage smooth that the glory of the Lord might be seen in the institution of the Messianic Kingdom, Isaiah 40:4-5.
- D. [Isaiah 40:3-5 is used by the Gospel writers of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-4; Mark 1:1-4; Luke 1:76-78; John 1:23), a desert prophet who ministered in Israel's spiritual wilderness that needed to be rectified for the coming of Messiah, so Isaiah 40:3-5 carries an application to the physical preparation of Israel to return to the Land for the Kingdom as well as the spiritual preparation for the institution of the Kingdom, *Ibid.*, p. 1091-1092.]
- E. A second voice then cries out, likely God's voice, telling Isaiah to cry out "to contrast the difference between people and God. People are temporary and they change. They are like the wild grass and flowers that come up in the springtime only to fade and fail when the weather gets hot (cf. Pss. 27:2; 102:11; 103:15-16). By contrast, God never fails for His Word endures forever," *Ibid.*, p. 1092; Isaiah 40:6-8. This section seeks to encourage the people of Judah whose faith was waning in the belief that they might never return to Israel and see God's blessing due to the long, hard Babylonian Captivity. Thus, this section is a call by God's prophet for His people to trust in the validity of His promises when hope from the human perspective seems impossible.
- F. In Isaiah 40:9, the one who passed along Isaiah's message to Judah was to call loudly to her towns that God was coming to Jerusalem, restoring His people from exile, *Ibid.* In place of fear of Gentile oppressors, the herald was to call God's people to behold their God Who was about to arrive as a conquering King.
- G. Indeed, Isaiah 40:10 claimed the Lord God would come with a strong hand of deliverance from foes, and His reward of messianic blessings would be with Him.
- H. In the Messianic Kingdom the Lord would thus establish, He would minister in great, gentle, nurturing blessing, described in the actions of a shepherd who gently cared for his endeared flock, Isaiah 40:11:
 - 1. God will pasture, graze, feed (*ra'ah*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 663; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 944-945) His flock of Judah much like a shepherd did in Isaiah's era, Isaiah 40:11a.
 - 2. He will gather (*qabas*, *Ibid.*, Kittel; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 867-868) the little lambs (*taleh*, *Ibid.*, p. 378) up into His arms and carry them in the-fold-of-the-garment-at-the-breast, bosom (*hiq*, *Ibid.*, p. 300-301), 40:11b.
 - 3. He will lead-to-a-watering-place-and-cause-to-rest-there (*nahal*, *Ibid.*, p. 624-625) nursing (ewes) (*'ul*, *Ibid.*, p. 732), or those vulnerable nursing mothers with vulnerable infants, Isaiah 40:11c.

Lesson: *Regardless how hopeless Judah's circumstances would seem after 70 years of long, hard captivity in Babylon, God's people were to trust God miraculously to keep His promise against all human odds to the contrary to release them from bondage and bountifully restore them and set up His very nurturing Messianic Kingdom.*

Application: *(1) If we are worn from hard trials and it seems impossible for God's blessing to occur, may we trust the supernatural power of God to keep His Word and nurture us in ways that far outstrip the barrenness we have known under trial. (2) May we confess our sins to avoid debilitating divine discipline and enjoy God's nurture.*