

## A Trek Through Isaiah 32 - 40:1-31

Bruce Pike

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For this week:

- The Book of the Servant
- Comfort for God's people 40:1-11
- God the Creator, guarantor of His promises 40:12-31 (part 1 to v20)

The Book of the Servant 38 - 55 (handout)

- Second major part of Isaiah's prophecy
- First: Book of the King
  - Yahweh's people among the world powers.
  - Question: Where is true security? Who is the Lord of history?
  - Failed Davidic king (Ahaz) rejects Yahweh and seeks security in alliance with Assyria.
  - Yahweh shows His sovereignty and faithfulness and mercy by delivering Jerusalem.
  - Perfect King coming to rule from Zion.
- Second: Book of the Servant
  - Yahweh's people in exile.
  - Question: How will Yahweh's people be redeemed from captivity?
  - Failed faith of Hezekiah and Judah with the Babylonian envoys
  - Yahweh shows His sovereignty and faithfulness and mercy by delivering His people from exile and by redeeming them and the world from sin.
  - Accomplished by the perfect Servant.

- Structure of the book
  - Hezekiah's test of faith (38-39)
    - Healing and promises. Profession of faith.
    - Babylonian envoys. Back to the world. All to Babylon.
  - Universal consolation (40:1 - 42:17)
    - To the exiles
    - Consolation for Yahweh's people and for the Gentiles
      - The exile does not show that Yahweh has been defeated by pagan gods or by His people's disobedience.
      - His faithfulness continues in the exile. His mercy and grace are greater than their sin.
      - He continues to be the Lord of history who can be trusted to deliver.
  - Yahweh's plan unfolded (42:18 - 44:23)
    - What He will accomplish
      - Redeem His people from exile by destroying proud Babylon
      - Demonstrate His mercy and grace
    - Israel's captivity and liberation (physical)
    - Israel's sin and redemption (spiritual)
  - Yahweh's plan fulfilled (44:24 - 55:13)
    - How it will be accomplished
    - The Great Deliverance: the Work of Cyrus (physical)
    - The Greater Deliverance: the Work of the Servant (spiritual)

This section: Consolation for Yahweh's people 40:1 - 41:20

- Two questions from the exiles
  - Does Yahweh want to rescue us, or has He given up on us because of our sin?
    - 40:1-11 He wants to rescue you so you can proclaim Him to the world.
  - Can Yahweh rescue us, or is He just a local deity to be defeated by those more powerful?
    - 40:12 - 41:7 He can. He is the Creator and the Lord of history.
- Structure
  - Three voices of comfort 40:1-11
  - Guaranteed by God as Creator 40:12-31
  - Guaranteed by God as the Lord of history 41:1-7
  - Three pictures of consolation 41:8-20
- Change in form from judgment to comfort. Change in form has caused many to say that a second person (or more) wrote Is 40-66. This course takes the position that one man wrote the entire book.
- Isaiah's message:
  - Judgment of Is 39 will come.
  - Judgment is not the end for God's people. After the judgment comes comfort.
  - Comfort is more abundant than judgment.

Three voices of comfort 40:1-11

- Here Isaiah answers the exiles' question, "Does Yahweh still want to deliver us?" A: YES

Comfort for Jerusalem 40:1-2

Isaiah 40:1–2 (LSB) "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.

2 "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem;  
And call out to her, that her warfare has been fulfilled,  
That her iniquity has been removed,  
That she has received from the hand of Yahweh  
Double for all her sins."

- V1 Command to comfort
  - Comfort, O comfort
    - Dramatic to match the message of Is 6
    - Plural imperatives. To an unnamed band of prophets
  - My people, says your God
    - Not "this people" of Is 6
    - Personal to His people: chosen; not abandoned.
    - Remembering the covenant
- V2 Command to speak
  - Speak to the heart
    - Speak to affect the heart
    - Speak to comfort
    - Speak to encourage one paralyzed by circumstances to take heart and believe
    - As Gen 50:21 Joseph speaking to his brothers after Jacob died: So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.
      - His brothers fearful that Joseph would take revenge.
      - Joseph comforting and reassuring them.
  - Of Jerusalem.
    - Representing the nation.
    - Feminine. Her lover has not abandoned her.
  - call out to her. Vigorously.

- Threefold message. Looking to the future.
  - That her warfare has been fulfilled,
    - Warfare. Also service. An appointed period of hardship. Refers to the bondage of the nation due to sin and apostasy
    - fulfilled. Fulfilled in the millennium.
  - That her iniquity has been removed,
    - Iniquity: sin nature.
    - removed: atoning sacrifice accepted, requirement of justice satisfied.
    - Looking forward to Is 53
  - That she has received from Yahweh's hand double for all her sins.
    - Received from Yahweh's hand. Tribulation due to sin and apostasy.
    - Double: lit folded in half. Matching halves.
      - Expressing precision: The tribulation experienced is exactly what was needed to accomplish Yahweh's purpose for His people.
        - Unbelievers would fall away.
        - The believing remnant would persevere and be blessed.
- V2 is an outline of the proclamation of comfort in the chapters following
  - 40:2 - 48:22 Redemption and deliverance from bondage
  - 49:1 - 57:21 Salvation from sins
  - 58:1 - 66:24 Coming blessing
- Note how the message in Is 40 adds to the the message of Is 6.
  - Both Is 6 and Is 40 have commands to proclaim
    - 6:9 Go and say to this people
    - 40:2 Speak to the heart of Jerusalem
  - In Is 6, the message to a rebellious nation was judgment with a hint of hope
    - Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "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. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.
  - In Is 40 the message to the exiles is comfort and hope after the exile.
  - No wonder the style and vocabulary are different!

Voice 1: The way of Yahweh 40:3-5

Isaiah 40:3–5 (LSB): A voice is calling,

“Prepare the way for Yahweh in the wilderness;

Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

4 “Let every valley be lifted up,

And every mountain and hill be made low;

And let the rough ground become a plain,

And the rugged terrain a broad valley;

5 Then the glory of Yahweh will be revealed,

And all flesh will see it together;

For the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.”

- V3a The herald
  - A voice is calling:
    - Picture of one crying out so that everyone can hear.
    - As a servant going before a king to ensure that his way was cleared.
    - Anonymous to emphasize the message.
    - Referenced by John the Baptist to describe himself to the Jews. (Jn 1:23)
- V3b-4 The command
  - Prepare the way for Yahweh in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
    - God coming to the aid of His people. As Dt 33:2 Yahweh came from Sinai...
    - Wilderness. Pictures the tragic condition of the nation: lost in sin and departed from God.
    - Way...highway. Straight and level. Made smooth. Suitable for a King.
    - Prepare the way
      - The people are to prepare the way by removing obstacles
      - As John the Baptist proclaims in Mt 3:8: Bear fruit in keeping with repentance
  - Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
    - How the way is to be prepared. Picture of building a road. Starts out rough. Valleys filled in, hills cut down. Road made straight and level.
    - Taking action based on faith.
    - Requires diligence.
- V5 The result
  - Then the glory of Yahweh will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together;
    - Glory of Yahweh. All that makes Him worthy.
    - Revealed. Manifested
    - All people will see it. Both believers and unbelievers. As Isaiah in Is 6.
  - V5 for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.
    - Confirmation

Voice 2: The word of Yahweh 40:6-8

Isaiah 40:6–8 (LSB): A voice says, “Call out.”

Then he answered, “What shall I call out?”

All flesh is grass, and all its lovingkindness is like the flower of the field.

7 The grass withers, the flower fades,

When the breath of Yahweh blows upon it;

Surely the people are grass.

8 The grass withers, the flower fades,

But the word of our God stands forever.

- V6a The call
  - A voice says, “Call out.” Then he answered, “What shall I call out?”
    - Both anonymous to emphasize the message.
- V6b-7 Transience of man
  - Picture of grass and flowers withering in a hot desert wind.
    - Grass typically used to picture the transience of man
    - Isaiah applying it to the great powers of the world.
  - Lovingkindness. Heb hesed.
    - Covenant faithfulness. Mere men don’t keep their agreements. As the Assyrians.
    - Dependability. Mere men cannot be relied upon in time of need. As the Egyptians.
  - The breath of Yahweh blows on it.
    - As the hot, dry Sirocco wind from Arabia blows over Palestine in May. Can turn the country brown in a day.
    - Testing the staying power of the grass
  - Withers, fades. Does not meet the test.
  - The people.
    - The world powers are unable to prevail against the Lord of history.
    - Yahweh’s people are unable to be faithful to Him.

- V8 Permanence of the word of God
  - But the word of our God stands forever.
  - Stands forever. As a rock or mountain not affected by the wind.
  - Our God. Specifically Yahweh.
  - Meets the test
    - Not forgotten
    - Not changed
    - Not invalidated
    - Always accomplished
  - The word is one of comfort and restoration because of atonement and forgiveness.
  - Peter applies this passage to the gospel
    - 1 Peter 1:23–25 (LSB): for you have been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, “All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word which was proclaimed to you as good news.
      - The gospel brings life which does not fade
  - Paradox of permanence
    - Oswalt: “If I insist that I am permanent then I become nothing; if I admit that God alone is permanent, then He breathes His permanence on me.”

### Voice 3: The coming of Yahweh 40:9-11

Isaiah 40:9–11 (LSB): Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Raise up your voice powerfully, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Raise it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”

10 Behold, Lord Yahweh will come with strength, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him.

11 Like a shepherd He will shepherd His flock; In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

- V9a Direction to the messenger
  - O Zion, bearer of good news;
    - As Is 2:3 Isaiah 2:3 (LSB): ... For from Zion the law will go forth And the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.
  - Raise up your voice powerfully,... Raise it up, do not fear.;
    - How the message is to be proclaimed
    - Powerfully
    - Without fear
- V9b The message: Behold your God.
  - Behold. Look.
  - Your God.
    - God’s presence. The central message of the gospel.
    - As Is 7:14 Behold, the virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (God is with us)
- V10-11 The message explained
  - Lord Yahweh will come with strength. Power.
  - With His arm ruling for Him. Sovereignty.
  - His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him.
    - Maybe the spoil of His victory to be distributed to His people
    - Maybe the reward for HIS work of salvation: His redeemed people
  - Like a shepherd He will shepherd His flock.
    - Flock. Re v10 His reward: the believing remnant saved
    - Cares for them like a shepherd: leads them, cares for them, protects them, knows them by name.
  - Contrast
    - V10 arm ruling. As in Is 7-37: The Lord of history
    - V11 arm carrying. A new picture: the caring Shepherd

### God the Creator, guarantor of His promises 40:12-31

- Exiles’ question: Is Yahweh able to deliver us? A: YES! He is the Creator of all things.
- Structure:
  - Five points, each introduced by questions



The Creator's greatness. 40:12-17

Isaiah 40:12–17 (LSB)

12Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And encompassed the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales?

13Who has encompassed the Spirit of Yahweh, Or as His counselor has informed Him?

14With whom did He take counsel and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge And made Him know the way of understanding?

15Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are counted as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the coastlands like fine dust.

16Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, Nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering.

17All the nations are as nothing before Him; They are counted by Him as non-existent and utterly formless.

- V12 His omnipotence

- Primary OT verse about God as Creator
- Who has.
  - None but God
  - Implies a single God outside of creation. Contrast with other world religions: deity is the soul of the world, manifesting itself in many ways all leading to holiness.
- Measured...encompassed...calculated...weighed. Precise working.
- Waters...dust. Heavens...earth. Contrasts indicating totality.
- Hollow of His hand...span (of the hand) Immensity of the Creator compared to the creation.

- V13-14 His omniscience

- Who has encompassed the Spirit of Yahweh, Or as His counselor has informed Him?
  - Encompassed. Same verb as v12 measured.
  - Spirit of Yahweh. His "inner man": mind, will, emotions, affections.
  - Picture of one who understands another's inner man and so can advise Him?
- With whom did He take counsel and who gave Him understanding?
  - Picture of a ruler consulting his advisors
- Who taught him
  - Picture of wise men whom a ruler might consult for wisdom
- Answer: None but God. He is the Wonderful Counselor (Is 9:6): He measures all, takes counsel from none, receives wisdom from none.
- Used by Paul in Ro 11:34 (doxology), 1 Cor 2:16 (the spiritual mind)
- Path of justice
  - Here is the basis for God's plan of redemption which enables Him to be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Ro 3:26).
  - No one taught Him this; it came from Him alone.

- V15-17 His independence
  - Behold.
    - Better: From the preceding points (v12-14)
    - 2x for emphasis
  - nations ... coastlands
    - All nations to the ends of the earth
  - V15 Drop from a bucket...speck of dust on the scales
    - Pictures of insignificance:
    - All the nations are unable to affect their Creator.
    - Not valueless
  - V16 Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, Nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering.
    - Lebanon. Heavily forested with much wildlife.
    - Not enough wood and animals for a significant offering
    - All man's religious works are not enough to affect God.
  - V17 All the nations are as nothing
    - All the nations. All nations together
    - as nothing before him. Compared to God. Heb 'ayin: there is not.
    - non-existent and utterly formless. As Gen 1:2 without form and void. Lacking meaning and purpose.

No likeness. 40:18-20

Isaiah 40:18–20 (LSB): To whom then will you liken God?

Or what likeness will you compare with Him?

19 As for the graven images, a craftsman casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.

20 He who is too impoverished to make such a contribution Chooses a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a wise craftsman To prepare a graven image that will not be shaken.

- v18 The unique God
  - To whom then will you liken God, Or what likeness will you compare with Him?
    - Then. Conclusion from the preceding
    - To whom ... will you liken God
      - Heb El. Title of the chief god in the Canaanite pantheon
      - Transcendent: beyond anything created.
    - What likeness will you compare with Him?
      - You cannot make anything that is like Yahweh.
      - Making a likeness of Him brings Him down to the level of the created.
- V19-20 The silliness of idolatry
  - Satire
  - Idols are man-made. Valuable materials. Much work. Need a good base to keep from falling over.
  - No deity here.
  - What is this compared to the Creator?

## The Creator as Lord. 40:21-24

Isaiah 40:21–24 (LSB): Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

22 It is He who inhabits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; It is He who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to inhabit.

23 It is He who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth utterly formless.

24 Scarcely have they been planted; Scarcely have they been sown; Scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, But He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm carries them away like stubble.

- v21 Challenge
  - Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
    - Challenging God's people, who should have known the omnipotent Creator
    - Chiastic: know - hear - declared - understood .
    - Two sources: (1) from His word (2) from His creation
- V22-24 Three clauses describing the Creator
  - It is He who inhabits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers
    - Separate from creation and over it
    - Inhabits above the circle of the earth. Fig created and maintains
    - Inhabitants are like grasshoppers: small and powerless.
  - It is He who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to inhabit. ;
    - Curtain. Light and thin veil.
    - Picture from nomadic life: pitching a tent to dwell in
  - It is He who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth utterly formless.
    - nothing...formless. As Gen 1:2 without form and void. Lacking significance, meaning, purpose. As compared to Yahweh.
  - Scarcely. Hardly in place before removed. 3x for effect
  - He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm carries them away like stubble
    - Picture of plants withering to stubble and carried off by the wind.
    - Done by God

Unlike any other. 40:25-26

Isaiah 40:25–26 (LSB): “To whom then will you liken Me That I would be his equal?” says the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these stars, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His vigor and the strength of His power, Not one of them is missing.

- V25a Challenge
  - To whom then will you liken Me That I would be his equal?
  - Then. Based on the preceding (v21-24)
  - Second challenge to compare
    - V18: What can you make that is like Yahweh? Nothing
    - Here: Who can you find that is like Yahweh? No one.
- V25b Yahweh is holy
  - Says the Holy One
    - Separate from His creation
    - Separate from evil
- V26 Yahweh is the Creator of the heavens
  - Lift up your eyes on high
    - Referring to the heavens because heavenly bodies were worshiped as gods
  - And see who has created these stars
    - Yahweh is not just one of the stars. He created the stars.
  - The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name
    - Picture of an army being mustered by its commander.
    - Calls them all by name. Know and have authority over.
    - Yahweh commands the stars.
  - Because of the greatness of His vigor and the strength of His power, Not one of them is missing.
    - Yahweh maintains the stars.
    - As Heb 1:3 ...upholds all things by the word of His power

## The Creator as the Faithful One. 40:27-31

Isaiah 40:27–31 (LSB): Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, “My way is hidden from Yahweh, And the justice due me passes by my God”?

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth, Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is unsearchable.

29 He gives power to the weary, And to him who lacks vigor He increases might.

30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And choice young men stumble badly,

31 Yet those who hope in Yahweh Will gain new power; They will mount up with wings like eagles; They will run and not get tired; They will walk and not become weary.

- v27 The exiles' complaints
  - Why do you say. An ongoing complaint based on unbelief
  - O Jacob, and assert, O Israel. Reminding them of their origin
  - My way is hidden from Yahweh.
    - Saying that Yahweh is not omniscient; He does not see His people's plight.
    - But Yahweh knows
      - their sinful ways: Is 8:11 Yahweh...disciplined me not to walk in the way of this people...
      - The way He has for them: Is 35:8 the Highway of Holiness
    - They have forgotten Ps 139:3 (You) are intimately acquainted with all my ways.
  - the justice due me passes by my God.
    - Saying that they have the right (apart from God) to be vindicated, and God is ignoring that right.
    - Attacking Yahweh's character
    - Forgetting Abram's words in Gen 18:25 Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justice?"
- V28 The truth
  - Do you not know? Have you not heard?
    - As v21 More rhetorical questions to His people
    - Reminding them what they already know
  - What Yahweh is like
    - Everlasting: not limited by time
    - Creator: not limited by space
    - Does not become weary or tired: Can do anything.
    - His understanding is unsearchable. He fully understands all of creation. Man cannot fully understand Him.
  - What this means
    - He does what He wants in His time.
    - We cannot understand but we can trust in His word.

- V29 Restoration
  - He gives power to the weary, And to him who lacks vigor He increases might
    - Weary: exhausted by the hardness of life
    - Lacks vigor: inherently weak.
    - He gives power...He increases might
      - God's understanding extends to His people:
      - He knows their weakness
      - He shares His power with them.
- V30-31 Two outcomes
  - Though youths grow weary and tired, And choice young men stumble badly
    - Those not trusting in Yahweh
    - Youths...choice young men. Best, most fit, in the prime of life.
    - Grow weary and tire. Mortal unto death
    - stumble badly. Fallible
  - Yet those who hope in Yahweh Will gain new power; They will mount up with wings like eagles; They will run and not get tired; They will walk and not become weary.
    - The believing remnant
    - Hope in Yahweh
      - trust in, rest in. Participle: continuing to hope in.
      - The only condition
    - Gain new power:
      - Be renewed
    - Mount up with wings like eagles
      - a new kind of strength, as if men became eagles
    - They will run and not get tired; They will walk and not become weary.
      - Not weary (overcome by life)
      - Not lacking vigor (inherently weak)
      - As Phil 3:4 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

### Application: The Basis of Our Comfort

Look at Is 40:12ff. Is 40:1-11 is a message of comfort to God's people in exile. Is 40:12-31 speaks of how this comfort is guaranteed by Yahweh as Creator. What did we learn about Him that guarantees our comfort?

- V12-17 The Creator's greatness
  - V12 Omnipotence
  - V13-14 Omniscience
  - V15-17 Independence
- V18-20 No likeness
  - V18 Yahweh unique
  - V19-20 Silliness of idols
- V21-24 The Creator as Lord
  - V22 Separate from creation and over it
  - V22 Spreads out heaven to inhabit
  - V23 Reduces human rulers to nothing
- V25-26 Unlike any other
  - V25b Holy. Separate from creation. Separate from evil.
  - V26 Creator of the heavens
- V27-31 The Creator as the Faithful One
  - Common complaints
    - God does not see my way
    - God is not doing me right
  - Answer
    - God is everlasting, Creator, does not weary, understanding unsearchable
    - He does what He wants in His time.
    - We cannot understand but we can trust in His word.
    - Those who will not believe will stumble and fall.
    - Those who believe will be strengthened

We are strangers and exiles in a world where sin is all around and the days are evil. How does Isaiah's message about God as Creator provide comfort to us?

- If Colorado voters amend the state constitution to guarantee the right to abortion?
- If a loved one goes away from the Lord?
- If we are surrounded by unbelievers at work?

## References

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