

Looking Beyond the Captivities

Isaiah Chapter Forty

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~ Our Spiritual Safari suffered through the first major division in the prophecy of Isaiah. From God's unrelenting judgments, as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, in chapters one through thirty-five, to Hezekiah's life extension and the problems the nation Israel experienced as a result, in chapters thirty-six through thirty-nine – the teaching was suffered through, I assure you, by this writer. If you have read along, but didn't find the first twenty-nine safari reports from Isaiah just a bit disturbing, then there is something radically wrong with you. That something is likely a lack of Bible literacy; but I digress. Either way, suffering is part of life; we will experience suffering in this world. Jesus said, *"in this world you will have trouble...."* That's a promise — not a maybe. I also know that man still hasn't answered how we can properly, correctly, and completely deal with suffering — because only the Holy Spirit of God is the Great Comforter of the saints — but He only provides comfort to those who will turn to Him as their refuge and Savior.

The second major division in the Book of Isaiah begins here in chapter forty, and runs through chapter sixty-six where we conclude with the revelation of our Savior in the place of suffering. The first thirty-five chapters brought us the governmental crown of God the Most High; but now, we're going to look upon the grace, mercy, and peace with God that Christ wrought for us on the cross. That theme will carry us through from here to the end of Isaiah. Most of the quotes we see from Isaiah today come almost exclusively from chapters forty through sixty-six. Frankly, you will be hard-pressed to find Christians quoting from the first thirty-five chapters of this prophecy. Well, neither section of Isaiah can be properly considered or correctly understood unless both sections — the whole book — are considered as a whole; in an educated, systematic, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led manner. There is no other way to find comfort and meaning in Isaiah....

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

~ So, the message has changed, but not the messenger – it's still Isaiah. This is where the higher critic comes along and declares, "... *since these messages are so totally different, then there must be two different Isaiah's.*" I suppose one writer with two subjects is beyond doctorate-level thinking-ability. I would even go as far as to say Isaiah gave two separate prophecies for two sets of people who will be serving God at two separate times in prophetic history. The world is jetting at light-speed towards judgment, friends. When someone asks, "*what is this world coming to?*" – Well, we have the Biblical answer – and it isn't pretty; and God isn't making any apologies for that which He says He is going to do. That which He says He is going to do is comforting to us who are saved. That's our promise; and how beautiful our Promise really is....

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

~ Although this is *not* a section on judgment, in the sense of condemnation, there is, by de facto, an inherent angle of consequential warnings against rejecting God that must be continuously factored in. That judgment and discernment can only come from rightly dividing the Word of God. Let's be smart and responsible when handling the Word of God, for a change, shall we? If we do, then it might actually come to mean something to someone else; and not just minister to our own peanut-theological religious philosophy. Well, the Lord is presented now as our Creator, Sustainer, Provider, and Savior. God is not a mysterious unknown entity to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. No, He is felt physically, and known Personally and presently; Christ is reality to His own. His sheep hear His voice. If that is not your relationship, then you'll do well to straighten it out right away.

We also have a polemic against idolatry presented as another side-theme and, quite frankly, it becomes over-the-top sarcastic in some places. Isaiah flourishes a mean pen as he makes flagrant attacks upon idolatry. Covetousness is idolatry, friends. Make a note of that. When God called Abraham, the command was to leave a home of idolatry, and go serve the True and Living God. From that faith, God chose a witness to testify to the

Unity of the Godhead. Jehovah — Elohim — a plural God is One Jehovah! That was the message Israel was to give to the world in the days of Isaiah in which we are studying. Today, the church, in the midst of atheism, is to witness of the Trinity; of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is life eternal, that they might know the only True and Living God and the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom He hath sent. We can only know the Lord that way by recognizing we are sinners who need a Savior. Only *then* will the Holy Spirit take the things of Christ and begin to show them unto us....

3 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.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

~ The lightning, thunder, and earthquakes of Mount Sinai are now subdued; smothered by the wonderful message of the grace of God! No longer is God saying “woe” to everyone; those burdens have all been lifted; but Someone must still bear those burdens! Why did God do it this way? Well, let me tell you a little secret – and let’s not let this get all over the internet: I don’t know. I’m sure God chose the best plan in an infinite number of plans available for us – and we can thank Him for giving us the best – and I also believe that if there had been a better way, He would have chosen that other way. Only God could give the invitation, *“come unto Me all who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”*

God desires to comfort us because love naturally emanates from His eternally pulsating heart of righteousness. That’s what Christ should mean to us today. Paul said, “... *blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*” - second Corinthians chapter one verse three. Now, that sounds great and wonderful – because it is – but I can promise you that you will *never* reach

the highest plane of practically applied spiritual understanding if there is unconfessed sin in your life; because that would be impossible. We must confess our sin if we want the debt to be paid. Our sins alienate us from God entirely, and break fellowship with our Father until the sin question is settled....

6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

~ Now, I don't find much comfort being compared to field grass. The Lord has mown me down too many times for me to purport that it's somehow okay. The reminder that we grow a little, and then we're either mowed down, eaten, grazed upon, or we just die away doesn't make me feel warm and fuzzy inside. Well, it actually *is* a comfort! While man is frail, faint, and feeble, the Word of God gives us joy. Our strength is the joy of the Lord; which comes by the security and safety we have in our foundation – the Lord Jesus Christ – that we rest on. Christ alone is our security and salvation. Peter said, “... *being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you....*” ~

9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

~ Man, without God, is a collective failure and abjectly transitory creature of profound insignificance. We only exist for a split second, relatively speaking, on this earth. So, Isaiah makes our first introduction to John the Baptist in this passage — who introduced the Lord Jesus Christ — and the “*good tidings*” in verse nine are the written Gospel, the law, the history of the nation Israel, and the prophets, all brought together in One Word. That’s what we are studying, friends. Until we see and recognize the Lord Jesus Christ manifest in the flesh, we have never truly turned to Him as God Almighty. He is Emmanuel, God with us.

In this chapter, Isaiah is drawing the first advent of Christ and the second advent of Christ together in the same picture. This passage looks forward to the Second Advent. Technically, even the Gospel accounts contain both advents of Christ; even though there is a very definite dispensation of past, present, and future in the Word of God. In many modern church works, an emphasis is usually placed on one — but not properly on both — advents of Christ; and we certainly need the proper division of the totality of Scriptures today — because, candidly, the church just doesn’t currently have that inspired revelation. And that is precisely why the church is so highly confused; but I digress, sort of....

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

~ Isaiah gives us another revelation of creation simply by speaking of God’s greatness. Singing “*How Great Thou Art*” here would be an understatement. How does one weigh mountains in scales when there is no gravity? Well, it takes direction from God to sort out those unanswerable questions. God knows no equal; and He knows all. He does not go to some other source for advice. There is no One in the history of mankind like the Lord Jesus Christ — Who was sinless. I see my equal every day; God never sees His. There are many distinctions that reveal you and I know very little

about God. Even with the Word of God in our hands, we don't fully understand half of it. That's why God hasn't revealed more than He has today. Jesus saith, *"I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now...."*

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

15 Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

17 All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

18 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

~ This presents a striking contrast between God and idols. Which world view, world system, theory, philosophy, or religion can we liken God to? - Those external psychological contraptions just happen to conflict with each other. One very unpopular example is that pictures of Jesus are things likened to God; and, in the second commandment, we are told not to make any images or likenesses of the Lord our God. Those who are simply sentimental about the Bible think I am a horrible person when I insist men only paint pictures of Jesus when they can no longer find Him in their hearts. We don't need pictures, friends. We need a little bit more Bible study to see Him....

19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

20 He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.

21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

22 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:

23 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

24 Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

~ So, we end this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with a reassurance that God knows the difficulties and suffering we are all experiencing right now. He comforts His children, and calls those who are lost to come to Him. When we belong to Jesus, the storms of life can be quieted for us. God wants us to ask in prayer what the lesson is He wants us to learn in the midst of our storms. Maybe He wants us to get out of the

boat and walk on water? Whatever the reason, there is a lesson in each storm. If we're going to walk with God, we're going to experience storms. Weathering storms will cost us something; and that something is everything. If it doesn't cost us everything then we may be following something – but it isn't Jesus Christ of Holy Writ. Don't kid yourself, my beloved...

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint ~

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