

The Greatness of God

Text: Isaiah 40:1-5

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The book of Isaiah describes something much deeper: spiritual slavery to the taskmaster of sin. Isaiah has presented the darkness of sin, the cloud of judgment, and a nation that is on the precipice of defeat. Only a few times has he spoken words of hope specifically pointed to the Messiah (7:14; 9:6; 11:1-12).

Truth: This chapter gives assurance of God's word, of the ultimate restoration of Israel, and the return of the Lord to fulfill His promises.

"Of all the evidence for the inspiration of the Bible there is none more convincing than the declaration of events to come and their fulfillment as foretold. This also affords grounds for faith in every crisis; God is a promise-keeping God" (Hailey 327).

I. **God's greatness is displayed through His prophetic promise of comfort (Isa. 40:1-2).**

This is a gift of comfort from the Almighty: *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*

God must punish His people by exile so that they can learn humility, but He will not abandon them.

While the nation will be justly punished for its pride, idolatry, and immorality, the promises of old will not be forgotten.

"God may withdraw His glory, withhold His blessings, and implement His rod of chastening, but He will never break His word or forget His promises. He is not impotent. He is not slack as people regard slackness. His love for wayward Israel has not been diminished (Psalm 137:5-6; Jer. 3:13; Zech. 2:8)" (Rosenthal 5). On that basis God extends comfort to His people.

Quote: "The comfort consists in speaking of words that will fall upon the heart with pleasure, comfort, and refreshment, to encourage and cheer the heart like gentle rain falling upon the ground (Hos. 2:14)" (Young 20).

****Promise of the conclusion of conflict**

Ultimately, Israel will pay for and be judged for her sin and rebellion, but Isaiah now speaks of this long period coming to an end. Night will turn into day as the righteous kingdom will be brought to pass.

****Promise of the pardon of sin**

The nation's sin will be completely atoned for and God will be now pleased to restore her.

This doesn't mean that the nation's suffering paid for their sins; rather, God has regarded the nation as having suffered enough.

****Promise of blessing**

Truth/Transition: The nation so long under suffering and judgment will one day – because of Jehovah's goodness – see its suffering end, iniquity pardoned, and sins sufficiently paid for by its punishment. But restoring the covenant relationship with God's people will not sufficiently pay the demand of the Law nor will it pay for personal sin. No human suffering could satisfy the Law, so God must and will do something about this most serious problem.

II. God's greatness is displayed through His prophetic promise of renewal (Isa. 40:3-4).

While human kings were concerned for physical obstacles, Jesus is not a human King for He is the King of Kings who is concerned about spiritual lives. **The way that the people prepare for the Lord is then a matter of the heart, a repentant heart to be exact. The obstacles to His entrance are not physical but spiritual. The people are "to remove every barrier and fill every hindering depression, so that they will be prepared for a new relationship with Jehovah and for the rich outpouring of blessings that He has promised" (Hailey 332).**

III. God's greatness is displayed through a prophetic promise of restoration of glory (Isa. 40:5).

When the way has been prepared, then God's glory will appear among men. God's glory is the totality of all of His attributes, character, and perfections. "It is the manifestation of any possession, quality, or action of God which causes Him to impress and influence His creatures. It is that which demand's humanity's recognition of God; that which declares His uniqueness and distinguishes Him as the self-existent, infinite, eternal God" (Rosenthal 8).

This glory will not be found in the Temple or any human dwelling. It will not be found in the Church. It will not be veiled in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ as in His first coming. No, this will be the totality of all that the Lord is and will pierce the darkness like the brightest of lights.

Application: Where once the sin of the people had kept the Lord's glory at bay, they will repent and with that heart change will be prepared for the Lord's coming.!

This glory will be universal for all flesh will see it. This will not be done in secret. **The revelation of Jehovah's glory will be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as King over His kingdom. "When the glory of the Lord is revealed in all its fullness, it will be like unsheathing the sword of omnipotent truth. It will pierce the wicked and protect the righteous. It will be like the noonday sun whose rays can melt the wax or harden the clay. The manifestation of the glory of God will forever separate the righteous from the unrighteous" (Rosenthal 8).**

Jesus came the first time as a Lamb to die for mankind's sins. His glory was veiled yet witnessed by His own people in Israel. When Jesus comes the second time, He will come as a Lion to rule over mankind. His glory will be on full display for all to see. The curse of sin will be lifted and His reign will be in righteousness and justice (Heb. 9:28).

For many people, they will ignore the truth of God's word. They will mock and ridicule God's promises, but the Lord has spoken it, and it will happen. There is nothing man can do to change the promises and plan of God. So we live with hope. We testify of truth. Life is not a dead end or with no purpose. With God and His Son there is life worth living, answers for man's greatest needs, and an opportunity to tell others about the way, the truth, and the life. Those who choose the path of Christ's humiliation have the hope of His exaltation.