

7/30/00

Isaiah 40-41

The second major division of the book of Isaiah marks a radical turning point and for that reason many teach that there were two Isaiahs.

But all they have to do is listen to the words of Jesus as He quotes from both sections of the book and says, "Isaiah says", exposing the foolishness and intellectual confusion of man.

A scholar in Tel Aviv, put the Book of Isaiah through a computer to see if there was any significant difference in style and vocabulary between Isaiah 1-39 and 40-66. He found only one, Chapters 40-66 had significantly tell war terminology.

The first division has dealt with judgment over Judah and Israel, now convert, forgiveness and redemption is proclaimed.

The first division is equivalent to the Old Testament Law and the second division to the New Testament of Grace.

In the introduction of Isaiah we divided up the second half of the book into three parts.

- I. The supremacy of Jehovah through revelation: Theology. Is. 40-48
- II. The servant of Jehovah for redemption: Soteriology. Is. 49-57
- III. The challenge of Jehovah by future predictions: Eschatology. Is. 58-66

In the next nine chapters the supremacy of Jehovah is going to be declared by His promise and ability to forgive the sin of His people, comfort them and redeem them, Is. 40-48

40:1-2 The proclamation of comfort through forgiveness.

- 40:1** The command of God to the prophet to announce the proclamation of the heavenly court.
- 1) The announcement of comfort is to ring out to the people of God.
 - a) The double imperative in the plural form characterizes the intensity and emotional joy of God at this message.
 - b) The repetition of the announcement of comfort is to assure His people of its certainty to encourage them.
 - 2) The authority of the message is from God Himself, be the phrases, "My people" and "Says your God". Hos. 1:9
 - a) He is the Holy One of Israel. Is. 1:4g,
 - b) He is the Holy One, unequalled. Is. 40:25

- c) He is the personal God of Israel, “Your God”.
- 3) The message to be spoken is very specific. vs. 2
- a) To comfort Jerusalem and cry out to her as a herald, literally to comfort the heart of Jerusalem.
 - b) First that her warfare is ended.
 - 1) Her striving in sin against God.
 - 2) Her opposition by God through Assyria and Babylon to come.
 - 3) Her hard service that she would experience in Babylon.
 - c) That her iniquity is pardoned.
 - 1) Provisions had been made.
 - 2) Personal response was necessary.
 - d) The reason being that she had received from her Lord’s hand, “Double for all her sins”
 - 1) The practice of a debt paid was to nail the original document of debt on the door and the document of payment in full over it, there being nothing against the original debt.
 - 2) Such was the promise to Jerusalem as a covenant people. Ex. 19:56; Lev. 20:26; Deut. 7:6.

40:3-5 The proclamation of the coming Messiah.

40:3 The one to deliver the message was to be John the Baptist.

1) John himself told the Pharisees that he was not the Messiah but the voice crying in the wilderness. Matt. 3:3; Lk. 3:4; Mk. 1:2-3; Jn. 1:23

2) John was to prepare the way of the Lord as he preached in the wilderness and baptized for the remission of sins, declaring that the King of the Jews was coming.

* This is the highway of “our God”, not for pilgrims to return!

3) John was paving a highway for the Messiah, his cousin Jesus.

40:4 The manner of preparation is described in figurative language.

1) The valley shall be exalted.

2) Every mountain and hill brought low.

3) The crooked places shall be made straight or made plain and the rough places smooth.

* This was the practice of the day in preparing the roads for a coming king, so that his travel would be quick and easy.

40:5 The appearance of the Messiah would be the incarnation.

- 1) The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.
 - a) The Word became flesh and we beheld His glory, the glory the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. Jn. 1:14
 - b) The Greek LXX reads, “The salvation of God”.
- 2) And all flesh shall see it together, not only Israel.
 - * That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—1Jn. 1:1-2
- 3) The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.
 - * His authority is supreme, being all knowing, the Creator and Savior of the world with no equal to Him.

40:6-8 The proclamation of man’s temperalness.

- 1) The voice cried out again and the prophet asked , “what shall I cry?”

- 2) The prophet was to tell man that he was only on earth for a short while, as well as all it’s lowliness and would ultimately die as the flowers. vs. 6
- 3) The prophet was to tell man that man’s breath was in the hands of God. vs. 7
- 4) The prophet was to tell man that in contrast God’s Word was like God Himself, eternal, and would never cease to be. vs. 8
 - * Heaven and earth will pass away but His word will stand forever. Mk. 13:31

40:9-11 The proclamation of ultimate deliverance.

- 1) Jerusalem was to proclaim the good news on the highest mountain and not be afraid, declaring God’s authority. vs. 9
 - a) She would not be involved in the military victory, this would be God’s own doing!
 - b) The phrase “bring good tidings” in the Greek LXX is the one we get our word “evangelist”.
- 2) The Lord would deliver them from their future captivity of Babylon with a strong hand and by His rule reward them. vs. 10
 - * The implication of the reward, very possibly being the booty of war and

certainly, the returned provided the resources. Ezra, Neh.

- 3) The Lord would care for them and provide for them as a loving shepherd. vs. 11
 - a) He did so bringing them back from Babylon with tender love and affection of those weak and young lambs.
 - b) God called Cyrus by name, His anointed, 150 years before his birth, as well as giving the method of entering the city. Is. 45:1-3
 - c) He will do that at the end of the Great-Tribulation in the thousand years reign.

40:12-17 The proclamation of God's incomperableness.

- 1) God's vastness is described in relation to His creation. vs. 12
 - a) He measured the waters in the hollow of His hand.
 - b) He measured heaven with a span, the distance between His thumb and His little finger.
 - c) He calculated the dust of the earth in a measure, weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance.
- 2) God's Omniscience in contrast to man is declared. vs. 13-14

- a) Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him? vs. 13
 - * Paul quotes this verse in Romans. Rom. 11:34
- b) With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? vs. 14a-c
 - * Heathen gods, like kings depended on counselors!
- c) Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding? vs. 14d-e
- 3) God's power and greatness in relation to the nations is declared. vs. 15-17
 - a) The nations are as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing, all are insignificant altogether in comparison to the Holy One of Israel. vs. 15
 - b) Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering, the amount is insulting to Who He is and His greatness. vs. 16
 - c) All nations before Him are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless, they do not affect God or add worth to Him. vs. 17

40:18-20 The proclamation of God's impossibility to be replicated in an image.

- 1) To whom and what likeness or image will man make God. vs. 18
- 2) God describes the common practice of the rich casting an image of gold or silver. vs. 19
- 3) Those too poor simply seek to find a tree of quality wood to last the time and hire a workman to carve out an image that will not totter. vs. 20
* Images that can be melted down, shaped and totter and fall, unable to help themselves!

40:21-24 The proclamation of God's transcendence, being apart and beyond man.

- 1) Four basic questions are asked of Israel regarding the person of God, not a new revelation. vs. 21
- 2) He is the overseer of the earth as He sits on the circle of the earth, or enthroned on the canopy of the earth, man is insignificant as a grasshopper, as He stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in.. vs. 22
- 3) He defeats princes and reduces judges to being useless. vs. 23
- 4) He will oppose all they do.

40:25-26 The proclamation of God's creative power.

- 1) He is unequalled by any, the Holy One. vs. 25
* Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:2-3
- 2) He created "bara"?, out of nothing, speaking the stars into existence and He knows their number and their names, sustaining them all, none is missing. vs. 26
- 3) He is both Creator and sustainer, having everything under control!

40:27-31 The proclamation of God's eternalness.

- 1) God rebukes Jacob and Israel for thinking that God does not see all they do and that He is unfair, ignoring their just claim. vs. 27
* Jacob appears forty times in Isaiah, two-thirds of them occurs between chapter forty to sixty-six, he was in exile and God delivered and brought him back, so they!.
- 2) He is Eternal, Creator, Omnipotent and Omniscient and has the long-term plan and purpose in mind for man. vs. 28
a) They should have known this from the past relationship.

- b) As often is the case, from man's perspective God is mistaken and unfair!
 - c) He is the Creator, never faints or becomes weary and is inexhaustive in understanding by man's searching.
- 3) He will give power to the weak, strengthens them. vs. 29
 * Paul points out his own boasting in weakness, in order to be strong. 2Cor. 12:10
- 4) He is not dependent on youth, for they also faint and become weary. vs. 30
- 5) He will strengthen those who wait on Him to mount up like eagle to rise above the moment or circumstances. vs. 31
- a) Notice the direction of the strength, it is from heaven that it comes, filching like eagles. Ex. 19:4; Deut.32:11
 - b) Then they shall run and not be weary.
 - c) Then they shall run and not faint.

41:1-7 The challenge from history past and future.

41:1 The wisdom of the nations is declared.

- a) The nations are told to keep their silence before God and in ridicule to renew their strength to complete in judgment with God.

- b) The nations are to come near God to judge who is the author of the great historical events of man, presenting the legal contest between He and the pagan gods.

41:2-4 The Lord asks a series of questions.

- 1) The one from the east is Cyrus, who He would call by name to defeat Babylon. vs. 2-3, Is. 45:1-3

* Cyrus, King of Persia crossed the Tigris from the east and so entered the Babylonian Empire. Then he marched victoriously against Croesus, king of Lydia and took his capital, Sardis, in western Asia Minor, having already subdued the Meds in the north, as verse 25 will tell us. Therefore he could be described as being both from the east and the north.

- 2) The One doing this is the Sovereign Lord over history, for it is "His-story". vs. 4; Dan. 4:35
 - a) The prophetic perfect describes with vividness what is yet to be as if it already has been.
 - b) God is the first and last, the all mighty.

41:5-7 The nations response to Cyrus advance.

- 1) They feared and came together. vs. 5
- 2) They encouraged each other and the craftsman encouraged the goldsmith by making gods and fastening them to a pole, so as not to totter. vs. 6-7; Is. 40:18-20

41:8--10 The nation of Israel were different.

- 1) They were the servant of Jehovah in the captivity of Babylon and Medo-Peria. vs. 8a
- 2) They had been chose by Jehovah. vs. 8b
- 3) They were descendants of Abraham and God's friend. vs. 8c; 2Chron. 20:7; Ja. 2:23
- 4) They had called and gathered them from the ends off the earth and not cast them away, from Ur to Babylon. vs. 9
- 5) They were not to be like the nations. vs. 10
 - a) They were not to fear, for God was with them. vs. 10a-b
 - b) They would be strengthen by God. vs. 10c
 - c) They would be helped by God. vs. 10d
 - d) They would be upheld with the righteous right hand of God. vs. 10e

41:11-13 The promised protection by God.

- 1) God would defend them by all who would come against them, coming to none existence. vs. 11
- 2) God would allow them to see that through their history. vs. 12
- 3) God, the Lord their God would help them, so they were not to be afraid. vs. 13

41:14-16 The Lord strongly encourages Jacob to trust Him.

- 1) The encouragement comes in a strong reproof from their Redeemer "goel", calling Jacob a worm, yet identifying the men of Israel. vs. 14
 - a) The "goel" who would ransom and also avenge a family member.
 - b) If one sold themselves into slavery, the "goel" could redeem them. Ex. 13; Lev. 25; 27
 - c) If someone killed a family member, the "goel" would be the avenger of blood.
 - d) There is an ongoing parallel in the Scriptures between "redeem and Redeemer", "save and Savior".
 - e) The relationship is one with sacrifice and the shedding of blood to atone for sins and buy back.
- 2) The Lord promised that Israel would be victorious over her enemies and rejoice

in her God, the Holy One of Israel. vs. 15-18

* The key phrase again the guarantee of his truthfulness and faithfulness!

41:17-20 The promise of meeting all their needs in times of desperation.

- 1) He would hear and not forsake them. vs. 17
- 2) He would provide through His creation. vs. 18-19
- 3) He would do so in order that they recognize that it had been the Holy One had done all. vs. 20

41:21-24 The Lord God challenges the gods of the nations to prophecy.

- 1) God pleads that the gods reveal future things or even things that have taken place, that they may be considered. vs. 21-22
- 2) God says this would prove their godhood, be it good or evil, so as to be astonished. vs. 23
- 3) God declares them to be nothing and those who choose idol gods an abomination to Himself. vs. 24

41:25-29 The Lord God Jehovah again predicts the coming of Cyrus to prove that He is God.

1) He alone did this. vs. 25-26

2) He saw all the people in idolatry, being life-less, empty and full of confusion like their idols. vs. 27-29