

Commentary on Isaiah chapter 40, by Chuck Smith 8.16.23

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August memory verse 1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV) having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

NOTE: No Bible study Wednesday 8.23.23 Church outing see back page

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But he's talking about a whole new message of God for the people as we get into the new covenant of God. And so it is appropriate that this new section of Isaiah begins with the word of the Lord declaring,

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak 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 of her sins ([Isa 40:1-2](#)).

So the day of God's forgiveness, reconciliation.

The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God ([Isa 40:3](#)).

You remember when John the Baptist began his ministry that many people gathered out to him there at the Jordan River. And the Pharisees came unto John and they said, "Who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "Nope." "Are you Jeremiah?" "Nope." "Are you the Messiah?" "Nope." "Then who are you?" And he quoted this scripture, "I am the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord" ([John 1:23](#)). So he quoted to them this prophecy of Isaiah. And so we are coming into the new age, into the New Testament era, as from this point on Isaiah really begins to zero in on the coming Messiah. "The voice of him that cried in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'"

Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill will be brought down: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain ([Isa 40:4](#)):

The Lord's going to smooth out things. Going to fill in the valleys and bring down the hills. He's going to straighten the crooked paths and smooth things out.

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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 ([Isa 40:5](#)).

And so God declares the day when His glory will be revealed and all will see it. What a glorious day! How we anticipate that glorious day of the return of Jesus Christ when every eye shall see Him in His glory. That's more or less an introduction to this new section. And now he cries out declaring the weakness and the frailty of man as it is contrasted with the glory and power of God.

The voice said ([Isa 40:6](#)),

That is, the voice of the Lord to Isaiah.

Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? [Cry] All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand for ever ([Isa 40:6-8](#)).

So men are as grass. Actually, "What is life?" James said, "It's just like a vapor, it appears for a season and then it's gone" ([James 4:14](#)). It's like, "the grass of the field, which today is, and is tomorrow cast into the oven" ([Luke 12:28](#)). Speaking of the brevity of life and the frailty of life. Like a flower, it blossoms forth and then it fades away. That's what it's all about. I'm on the fading end. So is life. We're here for a time and then we pass on. But there is something that endures-the Word of the Lord. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word will never pass away" ([Matthew 24:35](#)). Oh, the value and the power of the Word of God. It is forever. Man, one generation will come and another will go and you got the changing generations of humanity, but God's Word lasting right on through from one generation to the next.

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! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work is before him ([Isa 40:9-10](#)).

The coming of our Lord.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd ([Isa 40:11](#)):

Now this is obvious-a reference to Jesus Christ. "Behold, Jehovah God will come with a strong hand. His arm will rule. Behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him." Jesus said, "Behold, I come and My reward is with Me" ([Revelation 22:12](#)) in His messages to the churches. For 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 ([Isa 40:11](#)).

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Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: I lay down My life for My sheep" ([John 10:11](#)). "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." And then it declares of the greatness of His power and of His glory.

Who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand ([Isa 40:12](#)),

The great oceans of the earth-the Atlantic, Pacific, Antarctic, Arctic, Indian-measured them in the hollow of His hand. That's a pretty big God. When you fly over the Atlantic, the Pacific, you see all that water that is there. There it is; He's measured it out. Here, let's create the oceans. How great! But even more,

he meted out heaven with the span ([Isa 40:12](#)),

How big is your God? It is so important that our theology be correct, because if our theology is not correct, then we're going to have problems all the way along. Knowing God is the most important thing in the world. Knowing the truth of God. And God has revealed the truth concerning Himself in this book. And God is so great and so vast and so powerful, so awesome that He measured the waters in the palm of His hand and He meted out the heavens with the span.

he comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? ([Isa 40:12](#))

God comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure. Have you ever wondered how many grains of sand there might be here upon the earth? You know that they've actually sort of come up with a figure? And do you know that the figure that they have come up with is approximately what they figure to be the number of stars in the heaven? Now it is interesting that when God said to Abraham, "Even as the stars of the heaven are innumerable and the sands of the sea, so will your descendants be innumerable" ([Hebrews 11:12](#)). But God made a comparison between the stars of the heaven and the sands of the sea and they believe that it is something like 10^{25} power is the number. By weighing the earth and the grains of sand and so forth, got a formula by which they came to that. But who knows? Who counteth? Once more, who cares?

Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD ([Isa 40:13](#)),

I have. Man, I've directed God in so many things. I've sought so many times to take over the reins and tell God how He ought to do it. "Now Lord, got it all figured out. If You'll just do this and this and this, just it will be smooth, Lord, and just really work like a clock." I've sought to direct God, Spirit of the Lord.

or being his counselor who hath taught him? ([Isa 40:13](#))

In reality, we've all endeavored to do this a time or two. To teach God what's best for us.

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With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? ([Isa 40:14](#))

Now as we realize the greatness and the vastness of God, and surely the power and the wisdom of God, how foolish for me to attempt to instruct God in anything! And yet, so often our prayers are like little information times. "Now Lord, I want You to know what's going on. And I don't like it." And I start laying the trip on God. "This is what they did and this is what I said." Hey, He... What are you telling Him that He doesn't already know? Who's given God understanding? Who's instructed Him?

Our very endeavor to do so only indicates our lack of a true comprehension of the omniscience of God. This is what makes these doctrines of prosperity and everybody ought to be healed and all of this so ridiculous, because the effect of these doctrines is to place man in the driver's seat and God in the servant's seat. And now I am directing God what to do and how to do it. And rather than me taking my orders from God, it's reversed and God's got to be taking orders from me. Rather than God's will being done, there's an insistence that my will be done. And that whole system just is utterly blasphemous! To think that I know better than does God. What should be done in a given situation. Or I know what's best for me. I don't. I do. What's best for me is God to work out His will perfectly and completely in my life. That's what best for me. Nothing finer could ever happen to me.

Behold, the nations are like a drop of a bucket ([Isa 40:15](#)),

So that's where that phrase "a drop in a bucket" has come from.

and are counted as the small dust of the balance ([Isa 40:15](#)):

In those days, of course, they did all of their weighing in balanced scales. They had the little weights, and in Proverbs, you remember how God doesn't like divers weights? Some of the crooked merchants would have one weight for buying stuff and another weight for selling stuff. And they were both marked one pound, but one of them was heavier than the other. And so if you're buying you use one set of weights and in selling you use another set. And God said, "I hate those divers weights." And He really came down on them in the Proverbs. Now other merchants in endeavoring to show how totally honest they were, before they would put the merchandise in the scales, they would blow the dust off. So give me a pound of the almonds. And so he blows the dust off the scale and I think, "My, he's such an honest man. I'm not having to buy the dust. He's going to give me an honest weight. After all, he's taking care even to blow the dust off." So it was a common practice of blowing the dust off the scales before you weighed it in order to show how honest you were. So it's a figure of speech that Isaiah used that would be very vivid and picturesque to the people 'cause they could see the merchants blowing the dust off the scale. And as that dust is blowing off the scales, Isaiah is saying, "That's how the nations are before God. He can blow any of them out of existence in a moment."

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Nations that become so powerful, so strong, the Assyrian, like dust in the balance. God can blow them right out into oblivion. And God did. You haven't met an Assyrian lately, have you? God blew.

behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon ([Isa 40:15-16](#))

The tremendous forests that were in Lebanon at that time, should you cut the whole forest down,

It would not be sufficient to burn [for an altar of sacrifice unto God], or if you took all of the beasts they would not be sufficient for a burnt offering sacrifice. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and emptiness. To whom then will ye liken God? what kind of a likeness will ye compare unto him? ([Isa 40:16-18](#))

And he's talking now of the folly of the people making a little idol to represent God. What are you going to make Him like? So you take a piece of wood or you take gold or silver and you start to carve. What are you going to carve to make a likeness of God? What are you going to make Him like? Now you think of the Hindu religion and the gods that they have carved out. Ugly, gargoyle kind of things. Multi-legged and armed and weird. Is that what God looks like? If you're going to make a likeness of God, what kind of a likeness you going to make, Isaiah says.

The workman melts a graven image, and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold, and he places silver chains on it. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooses a tree ([Isa 40:19-20](#));

Now you don't have enough money to make a gold god, then you'd go out and get a tree and you start carving out a little wooden idol.

a tree that will not rot ([Isa 40:20](#));

So you seek to get good strong wood.

and then he seeks a cunning workman to prepare a carved out image, that he can set it up and worship ([Isa 40:20](#)).

And say, "That's my god."

Have ye not known? have ye not heard? has it not been told you from the beginning? have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; he stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in ([Isa 40:21-22](#)):

The greatness of God. Now what are you going to make Him like and what are you going to fashion to look like your god? Don't you realize how vast and great and so

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over-awing that He is that there's no representation that you can make in a likeness of Him.

Notice He sits upon the circle of the earth. The Bible did not and does not and has never taught a flat earth. That was the view of the scientists of those days, not the men of God. The Bible has never taught that the earth rested on the back of an elephant or a turtle, or was being held by Atlas. That was taught by the men of science in those days. But Job said, "He hanged the earth on nothing" ([Job 26:7](#)). He was scoffed at. How ridiculous! And so here, the circle of the earth. The earth is round. God's Word declared it. Scientists finally caught up with it.

He brings princes to nothing; he makes the judges of the earth empty. Yea, they shall not be planted ([Isa 40:23-24](#));

I feel like Habakkuk sometimes. "God, please don't show me anything else. I can't take it. Lord, I don't want to know it. Ignorance is bliss. God, I'd just rather not know these things. It just upsets me so much!" And Habakkuk, he said, "Lord, please, the whole thing is going down the tubes and You're not doing anything, God. I'd just rather not know. God, please, just don't show me anything else. I'm just tired of seeing it, Lord. I just can't take it. I just... Don't let me see it."

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 ([Isa 40:24](#)).

The princes and the judges of the earth.

To whom then will ye liken God ([Isa 40:25](#)),

What are you going to compare Him to? What kind of a standard would you use in trying to compare with God? Who is the equal? You see, how can you compare the finite with the infinite? There is no even basis for comparison. There's no standards.

Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created all of these stars, that brings out the constellations and all by their number: and he calls them all by their names ([Isa 40:26](#))

The Bible says that God calls all the stars by their names. And if there's 10^{25} power stars, that's a good memory. And these names aren't George or Joe, but they are Arcturus and a lot of really fancy names. God calls them all by their names. Who you going to liken Him like? Who you going to make Him equal to? Who's created all of these things?

by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why do you say, O Jacob, and you speak, O Israel, [saying] My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? ([Isa 40:26-27](#))

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What makes you think you can hide from God? What makes you think God isn't going to judge you? The prophet is saying to the people, "You're only fooling yourself if you think that you've hidden it from God. You're only fooling yourself if you think that God isn't going to bring judgment."

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding ([Isa 40:28](#)).

There is no way by which the understanding or wisdom or knowledge of God can be measured. He's omniscient. And yet,

He gives power to those who are fainting; and to those who have no might he increases strength ([Isa 40:29](#)).

How beautiful that is. That this great God who created the universe will strengthen me and help me in my weakness. Paul the apostle said that he had a weakness, but he said that that weakness was something that he actually gloried in in order that God's power might be demonstrated through him. For he said, "His strength is made perfect in our weakness" ([II Corinthians 12:9](#)). And so it's a glorious thing that I recognized my weakness, because then I learn to rely on Him and trust in Him. As long as I think I'm strong, as long as I think I can manage it, as long as I think I've got it. I can handle it, I've got it, don't worry. I'll take care of it. Man, I'll tell you, I'm heading for disaster. But when I say, "Hey, there's no way. I can't do it." Don't panic. Feel secure, because in my weakness, His strength is perfected.

Now we're so prone to feel secure when a guy says, "Well, don't worry, I'll handle that for you. I can do it." We think, "All right, this guy has really got it together." Hey, watch out, man. That's the kind of guy that's going to fold when the pressure really gets heavy. But the guy who is not certain of himself but certain of his God is the one you want to be around when the chips are down. Because that is the man through whom the power of the eternal God will be demonstrated. He gives power to the faint. And to them who have no might He increases strength.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 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 ([Isa 40:30-31](#)).

For the strength of the Lord is their portion and shall sustain them. This is the beginning of this glorious new section of the book of Isaiah and it is exciting. These last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah are just thrilling to read of what God has in store for the future.

May the Lord be with you, watch over and keep you through the week. And may His strength be perfected in your weakness as you learn to just wait upon the Lord for His work and His help in your lives.

**Open Door Bible Church
Church Outing and Baptism 2023**

Wednesday August 23th, regardless of weather

(No Bible study on Wed. Aug 23)

Baptism & Church outing at White Lake State Park

Come any time after 10 am and spend the day

Outing ends at dusk.

There will be no admission charge

Tell the attendant at the gate,

you are part of church group using the Pavilion

Please bring modest bathing suits.

Dinner will be served at 5:30 pm.

Church will provide hot dogs and hamburgers

with all the fixings and drinks.

Please bring salad or dessert to share.

Baptism will be at 6:30 pm.

**Those wanting to be Baptized need to take a short instruction
class, Sunday August 13, after lunch.**

**Please bring something to be Baptized in and a dry set of
clothes.**

If you have any questions call Pastor John's cell phone

508-380-0471