

**ISAIAH**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Isaiah chapter 40 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we saw in our last study of Isaiah God told Hezekiah that the Southern Kingdom of Judah would be taken into captivity, not in his day, but in the future. And some one hundred years from that time the Babylonians rose up and took Jerusalem. The first invasion took place in 606 B. C. and the third and final invasion took place in 586 B. C. During this last invasion they destroyed the city, its walls, The Temple and took the remaining people captive to Babylon leaving only the old and sick remaining in this devastated land. It is out of this, out of the nation being in captivity that chapter 40 opens up. You see, all hope has been lost. They were in captivity. All their efforts failed. Their only hope is going to be the Lord and we will see that this evening as God will deliver Israel, not only from their bondage in Babylon, but their bondage of sin that they are in and that every human being is in. God will be that Deliverer, that Savior!

One more point before we move on. When we began our study in the book of Isaiah I said that there are two major divisions in this book and in those divisions we see a miniature Bible. What do I mean by that? You will see that in the first thirty-nine chapters, like the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, they will deal with judgment upon idolatrous men.

But the final twenty-seven chapters, like the twenty-seven books of the New Testament declare a message of hope in the coming Messiah! We are now beginning the last twenty-seven chapters of the book of Isaiah and as we will see, they will speak heavily regarding the Savior that was to come and deliver His people from their sin. With that said, let's begin reading in Isaiah chapter 40, starting in verse 1 as we continue looking at this powerful book and see what the Lord has for us.

### ISAIAH 40

#### VERSES 1-2

1. Why did God's people need comforting? Because of the captivity that they were in, they were going to be taken captive to Babylon and they were captive by sin! And make no mistake about it, this captivity was not easy. In Psalm 137 we can see the pain they were going through as the Babylonians took them captive, **"By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us requested mirth, Saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How shall we sing the Lord's song In a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth; If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy."** Psalm 137:1-6.

I will deal with this issue of sin in a minute. But first let's deal with this Babylonian captivity. They were in a hopeless situation and they needed someone to give them hope, to give them comfort and the Lord wants to comfort His people, words that they needed to hear. You see, the captivity was going to come to an end, the chastening was over, they were going to return to their land of Israel.

2. Let me ask you this. Do you bring comfort to people or chaos? Now you may say, "Wait a minute pastor Joe, I am not God!" That is true, but aren't we suppose to bring the comfort of God to people? Of course we are. That is exactly what the Lord is saying here, "**Comfort, yes, comfort My people!' Says your God. Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her . . .**"

Isaiah 40:1-2a.

And that is exactly what Paul tells us in II Corinthians 1:3-4, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**"

First of all the Greek word that Paul uses for "**tribulation**" is THLIPSIS (thlip'-sis) and it speaks of pressure that is squeezing down upon you like a grape in a winepress! I bet if I were to ask each of you if you have ever felt that way before all of you would say, "***YES!***" You have felt like life was crashing down upon you, you were being squeezed. This is not some abstract thought, this is the reality of life, in this life we will have tribulation!

And Paul says that our God is **“the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort.”**

How in the world can Paul comfort others when his own life he has been squeezed like a grape in a winepress? How can he comfort others when his own life he has been hemmed in, his life has been troubled by the enemies of God? Because Paul experienced the mercy and comfort of God in his own life and thus he was able to speak from personal experience to people going through similar situations.

You see, like it or not, you are not going to be able to give to others what you have not received yourself from the Lord. We all have experiences in our lives that God has comforted us and seen us through. Let me also say this, the things you go through are not just for others, but God is teaching you lessons, trying to show you something and learn the lesson so you can move on.

As you go through these things may you do so seeing the hand of God in them instead of becoming overwhelmed by the situation! God is not going to test you beyond what you are able to handle and the key of course is not to trust in yourself, but in God.

“Mr. Knox, a little before his death, rose out of his bed; and being asked wherefore, being so sick, he would offer to rise? He answered, that he had sweet meditations of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that night, and now he would go into the pulpit, and impart to others the comforts he felt in his soul.” (Trapp). May we be willing to share our lives and the comfort of God with others! Will you get hurt at times? Sure, but don't let that stop you from bringing the comfort of God to people, it is what they need!

3. Back here in verse 2 of Isaiah chapter 40 these words seem a little confusing. It speaks of God pardoning the sins of His people and then it says, “**For she has received from the LORD’S hand Double for all her sins.**” It sounds like the Jewish people will pay twice as much for the sins they committed and how does that fit in with the pardoning of their sins? Doesn’t it seem unfair for God to have them pay double for their sins?

That word “**double**” can be confusing but in Exodus 26:9 in speaking of the curtain in the Tabernacle it means “to fold over, fold in half.” “. . . When something is folded over, each half corresponds exactly with the other half, and this would yield the thought of exact correspondence between sin and payment.” (Motyer).

In other words, a payment for sin has been made and that payment was exactly what was needed. The payment for sin was paid in full and we know that was accomplished by Jesus on the cross of Calvary! Therefore, tell the person who feels guilty, depressed, discouraged, or defeated that Jesus is coming back and that their sins are forgiven - for those are comforting words, indeed! In fact, this is the word of comfort for a lost world today.

#### VERSES 3-5

1. As we have seen in our study in the Gospel of Matthew on Sunday mornings, this passage of Isaiah has a direct fulfillment in the person and ministry of John the Baptist. He was the man who prepared the way for the coming of the Lord. (Matthew 3:1-6, Mark 1:1-4, Luke 1:76-78, John 1:23). And John was not preparing a physical landscape but the hearts of the people. He told the people to “**. . . ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’**” Matthew 3:2.

2. Now when you think about it, that is exactly what we are doing today. We are preparing the people for the Lord's return and we are praying for the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the people so that their eyes may be open and that they may see Jesus.

In saying that we also need to understand that, like John, we are not to draw people to ourselves but we are to draw them to Jesus. And there is that preparation that needs to take place and prayer is a great place to start. Building a road is very much like the preparation God must do in our hearts. They are both expensive or they will cost us something, they both must deal with many different problems and environments, and they both take an expert engineer and for us, that is Jesus Christ!

The idea that Isaiah is putting forth is that all the obstacles between God and His people will be removed. Sin, which separated man from God, will be done away with or I should say that the forgiveness of those sins was paid for by Jesus so that we can approach God. Sin will not be done away completely until the New Heavens and the New Earth are created. Those obstacles were removed when Jesus came the first time, even though we do allow the flesh to get in the way from time to time, but the penalty for our sin was paid in full by Jesus. Now ultimately in the Kingdom Age, all those rough, rocky, roads will be removed, and we will travel on the Highway of Holiness to worship the Lord. That is those physical obstacles and those spiritual obstacles!

3. Isaiah also speaks of “**The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together, For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.**” Isaiah 40:5. When Jesus came the first time we are told in John 1:14, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**” In other words, they saw the glory of God before them even though it was veiled in flesh. And when He comes again we read in Matthew 24:30, “**Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**” Notice that He will return in glory and every eye will see Him just as Isaiah said!

#### VERSES 6-8

1. The question here by the voice in the wilderness is “**What shall I cry?**” Yes the message is important but what will he say. And we don’t have to guess, we are given the message. We see a picture here of the frailty of man. That man is like the grass, he may be beautiful but that is short-lived. Before he knows it he is turning brown and barren. We are all in the process of dying, some more quickly than others but it will affect all of us. And when compared to eternity, life is short, it is very brief!

How could this have happened? When Adam sinned, when he disobeyed God in the Garden, God had warned him that in eating that forbidden fruit that “**dying you will surely die.**” You see, there was no death, no destruction until sin entered the world and then the second law of thermodynamics or the entropy law was put into play. In that law we see things decay, move towards disorder and die.

Now there is a comparison here. Man is frail, man is dying but God and His Word will remain. That should be a comfort to all of us as we see nations and leaders come and go, realizing that God is in control and has told us many of the things that are coming to pass. William Kelly put it like this, “As the end draws nearer we do greatly need simplicity to rest upon God’s Word. There may be difficulties to such as we are in, and the Word seems a weak thing to confide in for eternity, but in truth it is more stable than heaven or earth.”

Think about that for a minute. “Written on material that perishes, having to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years before the invention of the printing press, did not diminish its style, correctness, nor existence. The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more manuscript evidence than any ten pieces of classical literature combined.” (Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*).

Now man has tried to eradicate God’s Word but guess what, God’s Word is still standing and the men who have tried to eradicate it have long since passed! Back in 303 A. D., the Roman Emperor Diocletian demanded that every copy of the Scriptures in the Roman Empire be burned. He failed, and 25 years later, the Roman Emperor Constantine commissioned a scholar named Eusebius to prepare 50 copies of the Bible at government expense.

I am sure many of you have heard of Voltaire, the French skeptic and infidel who died in 1778. He said that 100 years from his time, Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history, and that the Bible would be a forgotten book. Only 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used his press and his house to produce stacks of Bibles. God’s Word stands, man perishes!



One writer put it like this, “Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more love and cherished and read today than ever before. Infidels, with all their assaults, make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would on the Pyramids of Egypt. When the French monarch proposed a persecution of the Christians in his dominion, an old statesman and warrior said to him, ‘Sire, the Church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.’ So the hammers of the infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures. If this book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and book still lives.” (Hastings, cited in McDowell).

I like what Bernard Ramm wrote regarding this, “A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.” (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*).

2. Now how is this good news for us? We are dying and the Word of God is eternal and that is not a good thing for us. Listen carefully to what Peter tells us in I Peter 1:23-25, “**Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.**”

Peter is telling us that God's Word, the Bible brings forth life in that within its pages are the words of eternal life for us and as God's Spirit opens them up to us, we can be saved, we can be born again! Paul, In II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**" That means all 66 books, all 1,189 chapters; all 31,102 verses; all 788,280 words are inspired by God or breathed from the lips of God! In fact, the rabbi's felt that even the spaces between the words were inspired!

One of the things that really upsets me today is the disregard for God's Word by pastors and people. Do you realize the number of godly men and women who were put to death by the Catholic Church because they tried to get God's Word into the hands of the common people and the Catholic Church didn't want that to happen? And yet, today we see leaders saying things like, "We study God's Word too much!" or "We need to be open to new things outside of God's Word!" or "God's Word contains the Word of God but we have to find out which ones He spoke and which ones He didn't!" How tragic – just believe what Paul said that God's Word is inspired, all of it and then walk accordingly! And like we have seen, God's Word will stand and man will fade away, he will go back to the dust of the earth! Go to a cemetery and you will see how true that fact is, it is filled with dead people!

And please understand that Satan wants to get us away from God's Word, to twist God's Word because it not only brings forth life, it not only brings salvation to people, but it helps us to walk accordingly! God's Word tells us what is right. God's Word tells us what is wrong. God's Word tells us how to get right when we have gone astray. And God's Word tells us how to stay right so that we might be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work! God's Word will endure forever and the philosophies, the principles of man will come and go, they will not last forever nor will man!

The Gospel message, like Peter said, will bring forth life and the Gospel message is about Jesus and His atoning work on the cross of Calvary as He paid in full the penalty for our sins. Yes man will fade away, that is not the issue. The issue is Jesus and if He is not Lord and Savior of your life you too will fade away and not enter the Kingdom of God! You see, Peter makes a beautiful connection, showing that the enduring word Isaiah spoke of is the same word of the gospel that is preached and believed, bringing salvation.

#### VERSE 9

1. Why is there this cry to go up to the high mountains? Because of the good news that is being spoken. It is a message that everyone needs to hear. But what is that message? "**Behold your God!**" Isn't that the message we should be shouting from the rooftops! What a glorious message but if you don't know God or you know very little of Him, then what are you going to be shouting?

Let me show you what I mean. A great philosopher named Alexander Pope once wrote, “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man.” In one sermon, Spurgeon replied to that famous statement: “It has been said by someone that ‘the proper study of mankind is man.’ I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.”

So as you share the Word of God with people ask yourself, “Did I help people to behold your God?” That is the key and thus, be in His Word, be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading and shout from the rooftops, “**Behold your God!**”

#### VERSES 10-11

1. First of all we need to understand that the Lord is coming back. Many like to deny that today but it is our glorious hope. And when Jesus comes to set-up His Kingdom there will be blessings and judgments. Blessings to those who have received Him, they will enter into the Kingdom Age. Judgment for those who reject Him, cast into Hades until the Great White Throne Judgment.

2. Secondly, our God is so loving, so compassionate towards us. How do I know that? Because Isaiah paints for us a beautiful picture of a shepherd, it is a picture of our Lord. The Lord, being our shepherd, gathers us into His loving arms, carrying us close to His body, protecting us, comforting us, and leading us. That is the love that God has for each of us. It is as Zephaniah 3:17 tells us, **“The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”** That is the love of God over us, rejoicing over us, causing our hearts to be at peace as He quiets us with His love. You can just relax in the arms of Jesus!

Now in regards to Jesus being our shepherd, there are three different titles that are given to Jesus.

- **Jesus the Good Shepherd** (John 10:11-15). The reason that Jesus is the Good Shepherd is because He takes care of His flock, you and me. He was willing to lay down His life for us!
- **Jesus the Great Shepherd** (Hebrews 13:20). The reason that Jesus is the Great Shepherd is that He has triumphed over the enemy; He has set us free from our sins. The battle is won and we are waiting for Jesus to return and receive that which He purchased with His life, this earth!
- **Jesus the Chief Shepherd** (1 Peter 5:4). The reason that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd is because He will rule and reign over His people! Not only that but He will judge those who have rejected Him. Spurgeon put it like this, “Did you ever notice that the same Shepherd who saves the lost, will curse the finally impenitent? He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, ‘Depart ye cursed.’ What lips are those which pronounce those dreadful words? The Shepherd’s lips.”

3. In saying all that, the question we may now ask is this, “Who is this God?” Let’s read on and see!

VERSES 12-14

1. I think we often lose the perspective of how awesome our God is and Isaiah is trying to give us a little glimpse so that no matter what we are going through, we can find comfort in our Mighty God. He starts out by showing us that God; the One who cares for us is so vast that He holds the waters of this earth in the palm of His hand.

I am pretty sure that most if not all of you have not even considered the enormity of this fact. You see, water covers some 71% of the total earth's surface, making the water surface area some 139,692,000 square miles! If all of Earth's water (oceans, icecaps and glaciers, lakes, rivers, groundwater, and water in the atmosphere was put into a sphere, then the diameter of that water ball would be about 860 miles (about 1,385 kilometers), a bit more than the distance between Salt Lake City, Utah to Topeka, Kansas. The volume of all water would be about 332.5 million cubic miles (mi<sup>3</sup>), or 1,386 million cubic kilometers (km<sup>3</sup>). A cubic mile of water equals more than 1.1 trillion gallons. A cubic kilometer of water equals about 264 billion gallons. There is so much water on this planet that if the earth were flattened out, the entire earth would be under 1.5 miles of water. And it can all be contained in His hand!

2. We are also told that God measures the heavens with just the span of His hand. The average span of a man's hand is about 9 inches. But God measures the universe with the span of His hand! Light travels at 186,000 miles per second and the universe has been estimated at being 12 billion light years. To give you just a small idea of the enormity of that, if you were to jump on a light beam you would be able to circle the earth 7½ times in a single second! And God measures it with His hand!

3. Not only that but He has calculated the dust of the earth. Let me share this with you, I found it interesting. In an article called “Getting a Handle on How Much Cosmic Dust Hits Earth” we are told, “Estimates vary of how much cosmic dust and meteorites enter Earth’s atmosphere each day, but range anywhere from 5 to 300 metric tons, with estimates made from satellite data and extrapolations of meteorite falls. Thing is, no one really knows for sure and so far there hasn’t been any real coordinated efforts to find out. But a new project proposal called Cosmic Dust in the Terrestrial Atmosphere (CODITA) would provide more accurate estimates of how much material hits Earth, as well as how it might affect the atmosphere.”

<http://www.universetoday.com/94392/getting-a-handle-on-how-much-cosmic-dust-hits-earth/>.

“No one really knows for sure”? That is not accurate; we are told that God has **“calculated the dust of the earth in measure.”** The Lord measures it all.

4. To take it further, God knows how heavy the mountains are, He **“weighed the mountains in scales”** and the hills also for that matter, **“the hills in a balance.”** The evolutionist believes the universe, this earth, and all the life forms on this earth occurred by random chance or good-luck! God says He measured it all out, designed it and put together the balance for life to exist here. As you read this don’t you just want to shout out, ***“How great Thou Art!”*** God is so great, so dominant over all creation that we should just stand in awe of His power and glory, which should bring us great comfort knowing that He is our shepherd, the One who loves us and carries us all the days of our lives!

5. I do hate to admit this but from time-to-time I have tried to tell God what to do, give Him counsel of what should happen and that is never a good thing. You can try but how are you going to know more than an all-knowing God? You won't! He doesn't need to learn anything, He knows it all! Thus, as I pray, God imparts to me what needs to be done instead of me demanding God to respond in a certain way.

6. Let me make one more point here in regards to this phrase, **“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD.”** It is translated in the Septuagint translation of the Scriptures like this, **“Who has known the mind of the Lord?”** Paul quoted this in Romans 11:34 as he wrote beginning in verse 33 of Romans chapter 11, **“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?’ ‘Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”** Romans 11:33-36.

It is as Isaiah said, **“‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”** Isaiah 55:8-9.

Also, in Psalm 139:6 we are told, **“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.”** God has a plan, and we might not fully understand it now, but because we know the character, the nature of God, that He is good and there is no darkness in Him at all, we can trust that He is doing what is best! You see, God needs no counsel, no instruction, no teacher, and no one to show Him the way of understanding.



VERSES 15-17

1. We just saw the majesty, the power of God and now we get a perspective of how Almighty God looks at the power, the strength of nations. He sees them as nothing, just as dust on a scale amounted to nothing. That is how God looked at the power of nations. Never lose sight of that fact, God is in control and man is never in control. The clay cannot tell the potter what to do! Well, let me correct that. We, as the clay try to tell God what to do but that will never work!

2. Next we see the Lord speak of a burnt offering. Keep in mind that the forests of Lebanon had massive, strong and beautiful cedar trees. And God is saying that if you would set ablaze all those trees it would amount to nothing before Him. All the animals offered as a sacrifice would not be sufficient to satisfy God. Man's best efforts can not satisfy the honor and glory of God.

Let me put it like this. There is only One sacrifice that is worthy of God and that sacrifice was made some 2,000 years ago on the cross of Calvary by Jesus Christ. Everything else is meaningless before God because there is no other sacrifice that could appease God, that could pay the penalty that is due for our sins! It is only the sacrifice made by Jesus!

Man may try to think he is more powerful, smarter than God, but God says that is foolish, they are just a "**little thing.**" Man may try to offer sacrifices to appease the wrath of God and they are "**not sufficient to burn.**" It is all about God, the sacrifice He made to cover our sins, to take them completely away!

If you want to do it your way apart from God, this is how God feels, "**All nations before are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.**" Isaiah 40:17.

VERSES 18-20

1. In knowing the vastness of God, how are you going to make something to represent Him properly? You can't! But some try anyway and make idols of gold or silver chains. For those who couldn't afford it they will make an image out of wood. The thing is, to keep your god from falling you must put it on a chain or nail it to the ground.

That is a sad concept of Almighty God. In Psalm 115:3-8 we read, **“But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.”**

What ends up happening is that you will make a god into your own image, satisfying your own ideas of what god is about, and subject to the morals that you have set. And your god will always be less than you are for it can't see, or hear, or speak.

You can't make a representation of God, He is too vast, nor does He want us to, in fact He tells us not to do that for our worship would deteriorate around an object instead of the true and living God. Then why do people still do it? Maybe it is as the Old Scottish philosopher said many years ago, “Men never thought of painting a picture of Jesus until they had lost His presence in their hearts.” How true that is!

Redpath also had this to say regarding these idols, “Maybe we are not as crude as the ancient Israelites, though some nations are. However, some people worship a crucifix, others will worship the church, or idolize the preacher. Some people will bow before the gods of materialism, ambition, sex, even home and loved ones, and will substitute anything if only they can escape having to get down to the basic need of facing why it is that God does not guide or deliver.” Our God is not to be put into a box or made into some kind of image, the heavens of heavens can’t contain Him and yet we try to!

### VERSES 21-23

1. This reminds me a lot of God’s rebuke of Job, **“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors, When it burst forth and issued from the womb; When I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band; When I fixed My limit for it, And set bars and doors; When I said, ‘This far you may come, but no farther, And here your proud waves must stop!’ Have you commanded the morning since your days began, And caused the dawn to know its place, That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it? It takes on form like clay under a seal, And stands out like a garment. From the wicked their light is withheld, And the upraised arm is broken. Have you entered the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths? Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the breadth**

**of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this.**” Job 38:4-18. And the Lord goes on to rebuke Job for speaking of things that he has no knowledge of!

Here in Isaiah God is speaking to those who think they are so wise, so smart and He tells them that He sits above the circle of the earth. He is Almighty God, the creator of Heaven and Earth and man knows nothing compared to God.

Now here is something interesting to me, **“He who sits above the circle of the earth.”** Do you know what that means? God knew the earth was round and not flat. He should know that, He created it! But let’s put that into perspective. During the days of Columbus they still believed that the earth was flat, and if you sailed too far you would fall off the end of the earth. One writer from the early 1900’s put it like this, “When Columbus lived, people thought that the earth was flat. They believed the Atlantic Ocean to be filled with monsters large enough to devour their ships, and with fearful waterfalls over which their frail vessels would plunge to destruction. Columbus had to fight these foolish beliefs in order to get men to sail with him. He felt sure the earth was round.” (Emma Miler Bolenius, American Schoolbook Author, 1919).

African cultures thought the earth sat on the back of a huge tortoise. Hindu cultures thought it was held on the back of an elephant. The Greeks thought it was held on the shoulders of Atlas.

But here, in the book of Isaiah, written some 750 years before Christ, we are told that the earth is a sphere. Also, in Job 21:10, we are told the same thing, and the book of Job was written some 2,000 years before Christ. Almighty God knew this even though it took man thousands of years to figure this out. If we would only listen!

2. Isaiah also speaks of spreading out the heavens and Sir James Jeans, a British scientist put forth a theory that the galaxies are moving away from our galaxy in every direction. And his theory was proven correct. God knows these things because He created them!

We should be just as amazed as Isaiah was at the glory, the design of creation. You see, behind the creation is a glorious designer and creator, ***GOD!***

3. And as you can see in verse 23, God is in control, nothing escapes His knowledge. He raises up and brings down nations and people because He is sovereign.

#### VERSES 24-26

1. Man thinks he is so powerful, so smart and God says that He is going to blow on them and they will wither away. The unjust, those who have rejected Christ the Messiah will die in their sins and be eternally separated from God. And thus, what we see here is the power of God and the frailty of man and nations.

2. You see, God is so vast you can't compare Him with anyone or anything. In fact He not only created the stars, but calls them by name. Psalm 147:4 says, "**He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.**" To give you an idea of what that is all about, it has been estimated that just in our Milky Way galaxy alone there are 100 billion stars. And it has been estimate that in the universe there are 100 billion to a trillion galaxies with billions of stars in each of them, and you can do the math on that one. And yet, God calls them all by name!

So what is the point? Simply, the One who can name all the stars in the universe is the One who has promised Himself to us and the only way we are going to be able to approach Him is through Jesus Christ. And make no mistake about it, as we have seen how powerful, how wonderful, how amazing our God is that when He speaks words of comfort to us they are not empty words. What God has promised us He is more than able to bring them to pass!

### VERSES 27-30

1. At times it may seem that God has forgotten about us. But He didn't. God allows us to go through various situations for various reasons, with the outcome being that we are drawing closer to Him and being transformed into His image. And the problem for many Christians today is that they have lost hope in God, they have lost hope in the promises of God, they have lost hope in God's Word, they have simply lost hope. That is a terrible and lonely place to be. If you feel that way, "**Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.**" Isaiah 40:28. May we never forget that!

2. Let me share this with you regarding hope and you will see how important it is in our lives. And not just hope as in wishful thinking but a hope that is focused upon the Lord and His Word! A hope that is based in truth! We are told,

Viktor Frankl was one of Europe's leading Psychiatrists. But from 1942-1945 he endured imprisonment in Auschwitz and three other Nazi concentration camps. He saw what made the difference between the survivors and the dead, and it wasn't a matter of physical health and strength. What made the difference between the living and the dead was hope – something to live for beyond the barbed wire, something to look forward to, something to go home to after the war. He wrote about it in *Man's Search for Meaning*:

The prisoner who had lost faith in the future – his future – was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay. Usually this happened quite suddenly, in the form of a crisis, the symptoms of which were familiar to the experienced camp inmate. . . . Usually it began with the prisoner refusing one morning to get dressed and wash or to go out on the parade grounds. No entreaties, no blows, no threats had any effect. He just lay there, hardly moving. If this crisis was brought about by an illness, he refused to be taken to the sick-bay or to do anything to help himself. He simply gave up. There he remained, lying in his own excreta, and nothing bothered him any more.

Neither will we survive without something to live for beyond the barbed wire of this life. We'll give up and just lie there. It's a common condition, called despair. . . .

Isaiah is prophesying to the Jews exiled in Babylon. By this time they've been in captivity for some decades and are teetering on the edge of despair. . . . We've all thought, *There goes my life. There goes my happiness. All I can look forward to now is one long death sentence.* When our thoughts fall that way, what does God do? He comes with an infusion of hope. He hasn't abandoned us. He's bringing us the display of his glory (Isaiah 40:5). That the future of the whole world. So reality is more than this prison camp, and better too. There's something beyond the barbed wire – God himself. And he is coming.

- Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., Isaiah, pp. 249-250

When we are weak then we are strong because it is God who gives to us the strength that we need for any situation we face. “But it is taking so long to be delivered from this situation I am in! What can I do?” Let’s read on and you will see!

### VERSE 31

1. What a great verse but at times misunderstood. You see, when it says that we are to “**wait**” upon the Lord it speaks of waiting with the expectancy of God coming through and it implies that you are praying and acting upon what God has told you to do. It doesn’t mean you are to just kick back and be a couch potato and God will take care of it all. You do your part, and God will do His! We receive strength from the Lord as we wait upon Him! We are not running to and fro doing our own thing. But we are moving as the Lord leads us!

We will soar like eagles, we shall have our strength renewed, we shall run and not be weary, and we shall walk and not be faint! That is what the Lord has for us!

2. Now what is the purpose of this strength from the Lord? Isaiah tells us, “**They shall run and not be weary.**” In other words the purpose of this strength that the Lord gives to us is to move us forward, to make progress for Him. It is not strength to receive glory for ourselves but to bring glory to God! He will give to us the strength we need to accomplish the work that He has called us to do.

I have experienced this many times in my own life. When I thought there is no way I could accomplish all that is before me, I took that step of faith and in the end the work is done and God gets the glory. I don’t understand how it could be done but all He asks us to do is walk by faith, to run and you will not be weary as you do the work of the Lord.



Jeremiah 12:5 tells us, **“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?”**

The Lord is telling Jeremiah, “Look Jeremiah, if you are complaining about the work now, if you are tired, if you have been worn out running with the footmen, then you are going to be in trouble because things are going to get a lot worse!” I think Christians in America have become soft, they have become lazy. They want to live a “remote controlled” life where you just push a button, they don’t have to get up and doing anything. And if the work is tough, they complain.

Ladies, those of you who were involved with the pillows for the nursing home residents; my hat goes off to you. You made 150 pillows and it brought joy to my heart to see you working with joy in your hearts. I did not hear complaining, maybe there was a little but I didn’t hear any. And the people at St. Mary’s were blessed by the gifts you gave to them. Those were some long nights that you put in but you did it with joy and God blessed you!

What about the Christian battles we are going to face? Are we going to complain or bring it to the Lord in prayer and wait upon the Lord, see the salvation that He will bring to the situation and see our strength renewed through it all? May we do as Isaiah said, **“But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”** Isaiah 40:31. If you are worn out God is here to give you strength - if you will wait on Him!