

## Isaiah 40

### The comfort of the Almighty Creator

**Background.** The northern Kingdom of Israel has been captured by the Assyrians and the people deported. Judah had been saved at the last hour by Divine grace (Is. 36-37) Hezekiah faced death due to illness (39:1ff) but was graciously healed and given a sign by God to assure him of protection from the Assyrians (39:4-8). But Hezekiah failed to trust in God who keeps His promises and made an alliance with Merodach King of Babylon. Isaiah prophesied that the Kingdom of Babylon which Hezekiah wanted to make alliances with would, in the future, conquer Judah and take its inhabitants into captivity (39:6-7). In Chapter 40 Isaiah prophesies that God would comfort and rescue His people, their time of Divine punishment will end, and God would bring them back home.

#### **Overview – Hope for the hearers, for the future exiles and for us.**

**vv. 1-11.** Three voices proclaim a message of comfort and hope.

**vv. 12-26.** Because the Lord is Almighty, the Creator and ruler of all, His promises are secure.

**vv. 27-31.** The Lord, the everlasting God and Creator of all the world will not forget His people.

#### **Detail**

**vv.1-2.** Isaiah brings a word of comfort, their 'hard service' (God's punishment) is over. Why? Because their 'sins have been paid for' = they have paid the just punishment for their sins **and** they have received God's pardon for their sins. This is spelt out by 'she has received from the Lord's hand' = the Lord takes the initiative and provides the free gift of pardon. 'Double' = folded over, folded in half (Exod. 26:9). The halves are exact meaning the punishment is exactly fitting but there is also mystery in the Divine action of pardon, hidden from human understanding.

**vv.3-5.** The message of comfort is that they are to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. He will take them home (implied – spelt out in 9-11) on a level, easy highway. God's glory will be revealed to all people.

**vv. 6-8.** Contrasts human transience 'the grass withers and the flowers fall' with Divine permanence 'the word of our God endures forever'.

**vv. 9-11.** The promised coming of the Lord (3-4) will not be in vain.

**vv. 12-31.** God, all powerful Lord, and creator will fulfil His promises. The people are called to look to God for He alone can save them.

**Reflection/Response.** How does the knowledge that the penalty for our sin has been paid by Christ and we have forgiveness through him motivate us to seek to faithfully serve God? How does this message of hope for the exiles give us hope? How does knowing God as the all-powerful Lord and Creator help us move from complaining to God to praising God?

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