

## Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

When I first began this series on Christ and His church in the book of Isaiah, I had only considered a few chapters but the more I prepared and studied its content I realized that Christ and His church could be found tucked in here and there throughout many chapters, not just the few I had at first considered. Thus as I began this series in January of 2009 I had no idea that I would still be preaching on this series in March of 2011. I still find myself rejoicing of the many promises that were given to Isaiah by the Lord for the comfort and encouragement of God's people; promises and comforts that come down to us here this morning. I am returning to chapter 40, I did a 6-week series on this passage back in February and March of 2009. However, since chapter 40 is consider a dividing passage of Isaiah I want to return to it this morning to introduce the second half of the Book of Isaiah.

This first half has ended with Isaiah giving us a history during King Hezekiah's reign when the Assyrian army under Sennacherib had approached and proclaimed to the people within Jerusalem that he was about to destroy their city and take them captive. With boastful words he proclaimed that the gods of the cities he has recently conquered had not protected those cities from him and therefore they need not think their God could deliver them. Hezekiah having received a letter from King Sennacherib of Assyria demanding his surrender and mocking the God of Israel, Hezekiah prays this prayer, *"O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands — wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord, You alone."* (Isa 37:16-20) When Isaiah hears of Hezekiah's prayer he sends a message from God in response to this prayer assuring him that the Assyrian army will be destroyed, Sennacherib will return to Assyria where he will be killed and thus God will not be mocked. It was during the night that an angel of God went through the camp of the Assyrian army, and the next morning when they awoke, they found themselves dead. Sennacherib did return defeated and was killed by one of his sons, as Isaiah had prophesied. God was glorified and Assyria was humiliated.

Now we come to Isaiah 40 and I desire to give a quick review dealing with just some of the highlights of this passage this morning as we prepare to consider the second half of Isaiah's prophetic word. Because of the brevity of time and lack of space in the notes I did not read nor print the whole passage but I will read sections of the whole chapter as I consider each portion. So you may want to keep you Scripture opened as we progress in the message this morning.

A. The passage begins with these words, *"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God.*

1. The need for comfort

- a. We, as all mankind, were born sinners engaged in a battle against God; scripture tells us that we are at enmity with God.

*Rom 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

- b. God here assures us our warfare is ended.

"Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended,

2. What is that means of the cessation of our warfare whereby our iniquity is pardoned?

- a. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ having been justified by faith (Rom 5:1)
- b. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)
- c. Our sins have been pardoned, covered by the blood of Jesus
- d. Jesus has borne the wrath of God in our place

B. The next words of comfort come as an announcement of a coming messenger (See vs. 3-8)

1. This was fulfilled by John the Baptizer

*Isa 40:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord;*

2. A way as one would be prepared for a King was prepared by John

*Isa 40:4 Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth*

- a. This was the practice of that day to prepare a way for a King
- b. This was to make known that the coming Messiah was indeed the King of kings, *"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed."*

3. What should this messenger cry?
  - a. All flesh is grass
  - b. Men stand in need of a Redeemer
  - c. John's message was a call to repentance and faith
  - d. God's word alone is eternal

C. Next is a call to the Church, to Zion, it is to bring good tidings (see vs. 9-11)

1. It is the responsibility of the church to preach Christ
2. To proclaim this message with courage
3. Proclaim to all men to "Behold your God"
4. To ward of a coming Ruler who will come with authority
5. And also that He will come as a kind Shepherd
  - a. He will feed His flock
  - b. Gently lead the lambs, and carry us in His bosom

D. Next Isaiah proclaims the glory and greatness of our God (see vs. 12-14)

1. Here we see God as He is in comparison to His creation
  - a. Measures the waters of the earth in His hand
  - b. Measures the expanse of all the galaxies of the heavens above us with a span
  - c. Weighs the mountains of the earth as but dust on the balance
2. As He relates to men
  - a. Who has been His counselor
  - b. Where were you when He laid the foundations of the earth
  - c. Who instructs him on how to create or shows Him way of knowledge
  - d. When it comes to His justice who is to question how He deals with sinful man?
3. He asks to whom will you liken God? (see vs. 18-6)
  - a. He mocks those who would make an idol of metal or wood and worship it
  - b. He then asks, if one is not aware of the greatness of God
4. Then Isaiah makes men aware that God is ruler over the rulers of this world
  - a. Keep in mind the rulers of this earth are short lived
  - b. Nebuchadnezzar nor any ruler has real authority over the saints of God
5. And then the final question is asked, "To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One.
  - a. The gods of this world are but idols
  - b. The rulers of this world are passing
  - c. But our God is eternal
6. And then Isaiah reminds man that God has numbered the stars of heaven and named them all by name.
7. And then warns all those who are in the church visible who are tempted to question God or in any manner fault God with these words: (see vs. 27-28)
8. And then presses us to faith and courage (see v. 29)
  - a. Assuring us that He will strengthen us
  - b. Even in our weakness we are strong

CONCLUSION: Vs. 30-31 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, 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.

I close with these words from the apostle Paul that whatever trial or conflict we may know in this life we may be assured:

*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:37-39)*