



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The LORD Almighty--His Greatness(Isaiah 40:27-31)

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, February 28, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, February 28, 8:30 PM in Room #301**
(Speaker Pro-Tem's office)

“Today, all sorts of subjects are eagerly pursued; but the knowledge of God is neglected...Yet to know God is man's chief end, and justifies his existence. Even if a hundred lives were ours, this one aim would be sufficient for them all.”--John Calvin¹

Today we conclude Isaiah 40. It is only the first part of an eight-chapter section which proclaims the greatness of God. We will continue examining different sections of Isaiah 41-48 to discover more about this Yahweh God who has delivered us, redeemed us, saved us and has promised us that one day His Son will return to take us to be with Him in paradise.

INTRODUCTION

What has been revealed concerning the character and attributes of Yahweh God in Isaiah 40?

- He disciplines for sins; and forgives—v 2
- His glory will be revealed—v 5
- His word stands eternal—v 8
- He is all powerful—v 10, 12, 25, 26
- He is sovereign—v 10, 21-24
- He is compassionate, like a shepherd with his sheep—v 11
- He is the Creator—v 12
- He is all knowing and all wise—v 13, 14
- Nothing compares to Him
 - the nations do not compare—v 15, 17
 - other gods—v 18-20

With this beautiful portrait in the background, Isaiah concludes this section with great words of application and encouragement.

Isaiah 40:27-31 Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me

escapes the notice of my God "? »Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. »He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. »Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, »Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

I. THE PEOPLE'S COMPLAINT (40:27)

When Isaiah addresses “Jacob” and “Israel,” he is addressing the people of God. The context confirms the recipients of Isaiah’s words. In 40:1, God tells Isaiah to “Comfort My people” and verse 2, he was instructed to “Speak kindly to Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is then metaphorically instructed to speak to the cities of Judah, the southern province of Israel (40:9).

Therefore, it is the people of God making the complaints found in the rhetorical questions of verse 27. The complaints do not seem to be coming from greedy, selfish hearts, but from a people who truly wonder where their God is and what He is doing. Due to their own sin, they are in exile and feel rejected. They think Yahweh cannot see them and that He will not bring them justice. They believe that Yahweh has abandoned them or has passed over their case.

WE NEED TO BE REMINDED OF THE GREAT CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AND WE WILL SEE THAT OUR DOUBTS ARE TRULY FOOLISH AND UNJUSTIFIABLE.

Isaiah, though, points out the utter folly of these thoughts. He doesn’t try to counsel them by coddling to their feelings. He directly points out that their questions are unjustifiable and foolish by reminding them of the great attributes of God which have been eternally proclaimed; things they should have already known and have heard about (40: 28).

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, ROOM #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4THFLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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May this be a lesson to the people of God of today. If a follower of Jesus Christ wonders if God has abandoned him or her to fend for oneself, or questions if He truly sees one's pain, struggles and worries, or asks if God even cares—let Isaiah's words pull him or her out this selfish pity party. That person needs to be reminded of the great character and attributes of God and he or she will see their questions and doubts are truly foolish and unjustifiable.

II. ISAIAH'S ANSWER (40:28-29)

“Do you not know? Have you not heard?” The obvious answer to these questions is “You should.” These same rhetorical questions are found back in verse 21. E.J. Young writes “These questions are designed to call Israel's attention to the folly of her despondent attitude.”²

And take notice: Isaiah does not give them a direct answer. He basically says, “How can you say that? Think about it. Don't you remember what you have heard and seen? Yahweh God is ...”

ETERNAL

The Everlasting God, the LORD... (40:28b)

Isaiah has already hinted at this attribute of God back in verse 8, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” As concluded back then, God's word stands eternal because the One who uttered them is eternal.

Psalms 90:1-2 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Isaiah 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.”

Revelation 1:4a John, to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come...

God has always been and always will be. The first thing the people of Israel should have remembered is that God is eternal. It is also one of the first things believers today need to remember when one begins to believe or think that God has passed over his or her situation—God is not dead and He has not resigned from His position. He is still around; therefore, He knows.

THE CREATOR

...the Creator of the ends of the earth... (40:28c)

This truth has already been highlighted three times in Isaiah 40. As Isaiah continues to discuss God's great attributes in chapters 40-48, he states the fact that God is the creator of the universe **14** times. It is an essential truth to be implanted in the minds and hearts of all people—that Yahweh God is the creator of all.

IS GOD WORTHY TO BE TRUSTED? THE ARGUMENT FROM ISAIAH, UP TO THIS POINT, BOLDLY ANSWERS: “YES!”

It is understandable why this is one of the first truths abandoned by people against God. Romans 1 teaches that they suppress the truth of God and do not acknowledge Him (1:18), even though the creation clearly displays God (1:19-20). For when the Creator, the One who has a rightful claim to authority, is tossed aside, one is free to do as he or she pleases—with none to whom he or she is accountable. In turn, God gives them over to their desires (1:24, 28) and lets them follow their degrading passions (1:25-32).

But when the Creator is tossed aside, many unanswerable questions also arise—Where did we come from? Why are we here? What is truly right and wrong? What is our final destination? Is there any reason to hope? Who really cares and why should they?

Thus, a correct understanding that God is the Creator is essential to having a proper worldview and a fulfilled, peaceful life. He shows Himself powerful and wise in creation (Isaiah 40:12-14).

The people of Israel should have remembered is that God is the Creator—of the universe and of their own nation. And again, it is something today's

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believer needs to remember. God is the creator and sustainer of all that we see. He is sovereignly in control; and therefore, He knows.

ALL-MIGHTY

...*does not become weary or tired...* (40:28d)

This is the truth discussed in last week's study.³ God is omnipotent; that is, has all power. Isaiah commanded the people to "Lift up your eyes on high, and who created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number; He calls them by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing" (Is 40:26). Other passages proclaiming this truth:

Job 42:1-2 Then Job answered the LORD and said, "I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

Jeremiah 32:26-27 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?"

This is the third thing the people of Israel should have known and recalled: God is omnipotent. There is nothing too hard for the One who created the night sky and makes certain that not one of the billions of billions of stars is missing. Again, this is something a believer today should bring to mind: God is all-powerful and therefore, He knows. Nothing can stop Him from seeing one's situations. And there is nothing that He cannot deal with on the behalf of His children.

BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING

...*His understanding is inscrutable...* (40:28c)

In other words, Isaiah tells the Israelites, "Don't try to figure out what God is doing, you would never fully comprehend it." This was also Paul's conclusion in Romans as he discusses God's sovereignty and grace: *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?* (Rom. 11:33-34). So he just breaks out in praise: *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen* (11:36).

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares 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."

The Israelites should have remembered the ways of God were well beyond their understanding. Instead of trying to figure out all that God was doing and why, they were called to trust Him and to obey Him. Once again, this is something for the believer to remember—one cannot understand all that He does. We are finite beings trying to understand something infinite. Expecting an explanation from God for all He does is not reasonable (in reality, if He explained everything to us, we would be more confused than we are now) and it is not demandable. God is not required to give an account to us concerning His actions and plan.

Neither is it living by faith (2 Cor. 5:6-8). Raymond Ortland writes "So we don't live by explanations; we live by promises. We don't figure God out by our brains; we submit to Him by faith."⁴ Now, it is not a blind faith. We have His track record in the Old Testament. We can also pay heed to Isaiah's command to "Lift up your eyes..." The stars can still remind us in 2012 of God's great power and wisdom.

Much like the things we have discussed before, the questions get boiled down to this: "Is God worthy to be trusted?" The argument from Isaiah up to this point boldly answers: "Yes!" Therefore, the question becomes "Do you trust Him, even when you don't understand Him?"

MERCIFUL

He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. (40:29)

This takes the reader back to Isaiah's description of God's mighty arm in verse 11—"Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry *them* in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing *ewes*." Yahweh is a God of compassion; He shows much tender mercy to His people, even though He is a God of much strength. The Israelites should have remembered:

Psalms 23:1-3a The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul...

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The believer today should also remember this great attribute. God is not expecting us to prevail on our own because He knows we are unable. Instead, He is there to guide, restore strength, refresh, and reenergize His children who are struggling with life, faith, obedience and joy.

III. ISAIAH'S CONCLUSION TO THE MATTER (40:30-31)

Isaiah's concludes "Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly." These are the people who seem to have endless amounts of energy (which is why you don't see 50 year-old professional football players). But even these, at some time in life, will lose their strength and will fail. But in contrast, "...those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

The key word in this passage is "wait." It comes from the Hebrew word *qavah*. It can also be translated "hope" (NIV), or "look eagerly." In other words, "To wait for the LORD means to live in confident, eager suspense. It means to live with the tension of promises revealed but not yet fulfilled. This waiting is not killing time. It isn't sitting around, drumming your fingers. It is waiting on tip-toe, waiting with eager longing."⁵

Isaiah is quite blunt, friend. You and I cannot handle the demands of life on our wisdom, strength and endurance. Even if we believe we can work our way through it, we will fail. But the good news is that those who eagerly wait and trust in God will be empowered and given wisdom by the omnipotent God Himself. God, who is endless in strength, provides the power for His people to accomplish that which they need to endure and to accomplish that which He has called them to do. Like the farmer who tills and plants anticipating the crop in the fall, the believer looks ahead (even though the present may look bleak) with full confidence to that which God has for them (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58; Titus 2:12-13).

WRAP-UP

Believers (the children of God whose faith and trust is in Jesus Christ) who find themselves in the midst of a trial, testing, or a rough stretch of life (for whatever reason) have no reason to feel that God has abandon them or does not care for their case. Instead, they are to know that their God is the Creator and Sustainer and Sovereign One of all things; and know their God has always been here and always will be; and know their God is all powerful

and nothing tires or wearies Him; and know the ways of their God are beyond their understanding; and know their God is full of great mercies and grace. Therefore, they know that even though things look bad at this moment that their God has given them great promises to provide and strengthen them now and will, one day, deliver them to their eternal reward in the future. All the while bring great glory and honor to His name.

Psalm 46:10 (ESV) Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth!

"We sometimes look for hope in the wrong places. We look for reasons to live here inside the barbed wire rather than out there in the promised glory of God. But you and I don't need a quick fix. What we need is a clearer vision of God and a keener passion for his glory. What we need is to find rest in his faithfulness and energy in his desirability. Christianity is not a way to cut a deal with God for an easier life now. Christianity is what renews us to live for our real payoff in the future that God has promised."⁶

This great God can forgive your sins; are you interested?

¹ John Calvin, quoted in the introduction of *Institutes of Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:lxix.

² E.J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah Volume 3*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1993): 66.

³ A copy of last week's study can be found on-line at www.capitolcom.org/missouri/studies/807/2012/02/21/the-lord-almighty-omnipotent-isaiah-40-25-26 .

⁴ Raymond C. Ortlund, *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2005), 253.

⁵ Ibid, 254.

⁶ Ibid, 255.