

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 40:1-11

Topic

Isaiah delivers the joyful news to the southern kingdom of Judah that God intends to comfort them.

Title

***“Hey Judah Let Me Into Your Heart,
Then I Can Start To Make It Better”***

A half-pound of linguini with marinara sauce covered with a copious amount of Parmesan cheese accompanied by garlic bread

Chase that with a slice of my mom’s recipe NY cheesecake and you’ve got my comfort food.

What is your go-to comfort food?

Jesus often spoke of His comfort food:

- When tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread, a fasting Jesus quoted the Bible, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.”
- He told the Jewish leaders, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

If the Word of God is bread, then the next twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah are a comfort food feast.

Isaiah's first course is the comfort derived from the Lord's coming:

- Verse one: "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!"
- Verse three: "Prepare the way of the Lord," because He is coming.

"Comfort" and "Coming" go together like peanut butter & chocolate, or soup & salad. The apostle Paul paired them when he gave the believers in Thessalonica a teaching about the Lord coming to resurrect and rapture them, then telling them to "Comfort one another with these words" (4:13-18).

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 God Speaks "Comfort, Comfort,"** and **#2 You Speak "Coming, Coming."**

#1 - God Speaks "Comfort, Comfort" (v1-2)

After thirty-nine chapters, the nation of Judah finally turned back to God from idols. It was time for the LORD to comfort His chosen nation.

Isa 40:1 "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God.

Repetition emphasizes something important. Today we might say, "Here ye, Here ye," or "Pizza! Pizza!"

Contrary to their reputation as being a slough of despond, the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah are glorious. Sure, there is a lot of talk about judgment. But grace is on every page, too.

You can't dispute, however, that chapters forty through sixty-six are full-throttle comfort. Just for fun, I did something I'd never recommend. I opened a Bible randomly in Isaiah 40-66, and without looking, pointed to a verse. When I opened the Bible all the way, I found I was in chapter sixty-one, with my finger on verse four: "And they shall rebuild the old ruins, They shall raise up the former desolations, And they shall repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations." Encouraging? I'll say!

That's the way it's going to be from here on.

You might need comfort. You might need correction, or convincing, or chastening. Maybe a reproof; maybe a rebuke. The Lord knows what you need and when. If the Lord isn't comforting you the way *you* want, you can be sure it is the way *He* wants, in

order to grow you and to mature you. The apostle Paul wrote, He "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. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ" (Second Corinthians 1:4-5).

Comforters are made - forged in fiery trials and troubles.

If you are a fan of *Iron Man*, think back to when Tony Stark made the original Iron Man armor out of a bunch of junk while he was being held captive. Over time he perfected the suit. We don't always give Jesus much to work with, nevertheless He is busy every day, completing the work He has begun in us. We are all a little bit clunky this side of eternity. "Now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (First John 3:2).

Isa 40:2 "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD's hand Double for all her sins."

"Speak comfort to Jerusalem" is better translated, "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem." It is tender; it is intimate.

You can be helped, touched, moved by many things. I still cry when Lightning McQueen stops short of the finish line and helps the King finish the race. But Jesus is the only Person Who can speak to your heart. He alone can discern between your soul and your spirit. All other comfort is false and fleshly.

When you are talking to someone about Jesus, while appealing to logic and intellect is OK, don't forget God is using you as His voice to speak to their heart.

The Assyrian invasion had "ended," and very dramatically at that. That isn't the "warfare" Isaiah was referring to. The Jews had been at war against God on account of their "iniquity," their sin. It is why God sent Assyria in the first place. The LORD wanted Isaiah to comfort them with the truth that they were reconciled to Him.

The good people at gotquestions.org say, "*Reconciliation is the restoration of a relationship to a harmonious state after a dispute; it is the bringing of accord out of discord between two parties. Christian reconciliation is the work of God through Christ by which He restores mankind to a favorable relationship with Himself.*"

Christians have been reconciled to God. "You were his enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions. He has reconciled you to Himself through the death of Christ in His physical body. As a result, He has brought you into His own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault" (Colossians 1:21-22 NLT).

"For she has received from the LORD's hand Double for all her sins." A restitution, or fine, to double the amount of the wrong done was almost the normal standard of punishment under the Law of Moses (Exodus 22:4, 7). Here the same thought is presented in its opposite aspect. Israel has received "double for all her sins," and therefore would receive double blessings upon repenting.

Are you burdened by your past? Is the devil constantly throwing your sins in your face? If you confess your sins, God is faithful and just to forgive them and to cleanse you. Earlier in Isaiah we saw that after Judah repented, God called her His virgin daughter. She had, in fact, been committing spiritual adultery. That's what I call double blessing.

The LORD instructed His prophet to "comfort, comfort" Judah. What word would you choose for our nation?

I'll mention one thing, and hopefully you will understand I am only stating something obvious, not partisan. Many believers have historically voted based on a single issue - Abortion. Unless I've got it wrong (and I don't think I do), if things play out as they are projected to, the next presidential election will be the first I can remember in which there is no ProLife candidate to vote for:

- President Biden is not ProLife, nor is the Democratic Party.
- Dark horse candidate Robert F. Kennedy, Jr had to walk back comments that made him sound ProLife. His campaign was quick to say that "Mr. Kennedy's position on abortion is that it is always the woman's right to choose."
- President Trump is the presumptive Republican candidate, He told NBC's Kristen Welker on *Meet the Press* that he thinks he can negotiate a settlement that will please everyone by allowing abortion only through the first 15 weeks.

What word is God speaking to our nation? I don't think it is "comfort, comfort."

#2 - You Speak "Coming, Coming" (v3-11)

Isaiah will be talking quite a lot about Babylon. The rise of Babylon and its direct effects on Judah were still 150 years in the future to Isaiah. Everything from this point on, then, is prophecy. It is sometimes near prophecy, but it is often farther out.

You will also notice that Isaiah speaks as if he was there, in the future. He could because God would faithfully fulfill every prophecy.

Isa 40:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God.

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;

We've jumped to the first century and the ministry of John the Baptist. All four Gospel's applied this prophecy to him. These were the words he would use to announce to the Jewish people that their King had arrived, and therefore their Kingdom had come.

We don't know for how long John lived in the "wilderness," but we can assume he had a rough, unkempt exterior. He ate locusts dipped in honey. Go to israelmenu.com and click on Food, then Health & Energy Bars. You can order ready-to-eat whole Israeli locusts sourced from the banks of the Jordan.

The road construction exaggerates the leveling or smoothing out of the roads on which a dignitary would travel when he came to visit an area. Today an equivalent is, "roll out the red carpet."

Isa 40:5 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see *it* together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

"All flesh" did not "see... together" "the glory of the LORD... revealed" in His first century coming. This looks forward to the Kingdom of God on Earth. In the Revelation we learn it will be a one-thousand year rule over the Earth, hence it is commonly referred to as the Millennium, or the Millennial Kingdom.

One of the LORD's unconditional, *it's gonna happen*, promises to the physical descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac & Jacob was that the Jews would rule over the nations of the Earth from Jerusalem with a descendant of King David on the throne.

Here is where it gets wonderfully mysterious. John the Baptist and Jesus both announced, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Jesus came, fulfilling

Messianic prophecies. He made the nation of Israel a genuine offer of their Kingdom with Him as King. The leadership of the nation decided instead to crucify Him.

Jesus considered the offer of the Kingdom on Earth to be genuine; the Jews could have received Him.

How could that be? Don't know, but listen to Jesus:

- Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37). That is a genuine offer rejected by free choice on the part of the nation.
- The Jews believed that the prophet Elijah would precede the coming of their Messiah and announce Him. Jesus said, "If you are willing to receive *it*, [John] is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14). Later He had an exchange with His disciples in which He said, " 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist' " (Matthew 17:11-13).

The offer of the physical Kingdom of God on Earth was genuine. Let God be God in terms of How?

Isa 40:6 The voice said, "Cry out!"

This "voice," probably God's, gave the command, probably to Isaiah, to "cry out."

Isa 40:6 The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh *is* grass, And all its loveliness *is* like the flower of the field.

Isa 40:7 The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people *are* grass.

Isa 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

We wither and fade like grass and flowers. Why? Ask your dad & mom. *Your original dad & mom*. Adam & Eve's disobedience brought a curse on God's magnificent creation.

The emphasis here is on "loveliness" because the Word of God promises restoration of creation. Creation, and everything in it is deteriorating now, but the Lord will reverse that, and totally restore all things.

The apostle Paul wrote, "that creation would be set free from decay and would share in the glorious freedom of [God's] children" (Romans 8:21).

Isa 40:9 O Zion, You who bring good tidings, Get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, You who bring good tidings, Lift up your voice with strength, Lift *it* up, be not afraid; Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

"Zion" is "Jerusalem." The LORD commissions them to "Go, tell it on the mountain." Starting in Jerusalem, then moving out to "the cities of Judah," they are to preach "good tidings," i.e., the Gospel.

What is the Gospel? The word itself means, "good news." It is the good news is that Jesus added humanity to His deity, in order to die on the cross as a sacrifice and substitute for the human race. In doing so he can give sinners His righteousness as He takes upon himself your sin. You are saved when you believe Jesus.

This could be looking far ahead to the Time of Jacob's Trouble that is most commonly called the Great Tribulation:

- God will raise-up a ministry team we call the Two Witnesses. For the first 3½ years of that 7yr period these two guys will be invincible as they go about sharing the Gospel.
- God will raise-up a salvation army numbering 144,000. They are ethnic Jews, 12,000 from twelve of the tribes of Israel.

"Lift up your voice with strength, Lift *it* up, be not afraid..." That sounds a little like the Day of Pentecost. God the Holy Spirit came as promised and immediately the disciples - all of them Jews - received a new power and boldness to share Jesus with unbelievers. They feared only God.

Isa 40:10 Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong *hand*, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward *is* with Him, And His work before Him. When will this be? Well, it doesn't match what we know about Jesus' first century coming. There were no people accompanying Him whom He had "made safe" and "taken in war." This sounds more like a description of the Return of the King at the end of the 7yr Time of Jacob's Trouble to establish the promised Kingdom. The people

“taken in war” might be the captives to sin Jesus has set free in His war against the forces of evil.

Isa 40:11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry *them* in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.

The last words of God to Jonah is a question. “Should I not also have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 people, who do not know the difference between their right hand and their left, **as well as many animals?” (4:11 NASB).**

Animals? Really??? Yep, God is an animal lover. I came across this quote: “It is no surprise that Christian abolitionists like William Wilberforce and Hannah More also vigorously campaigned against animal cruelty. Care for animals is a mark of godliness: ‘Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel’ ” (Proverbs 12:10).

Will your pets be in Heaven? Dallas Seminary, professor Dr. Michael Svigel writes, “How about in the renewed heavens and earth, we will be given authority to resurrect our favorite pets.”

God can use the treatment of shepherds for their sheep to illustrate His treatment of you because He is compassionate and caring for animals.

At the conclusion of His discourse on the Great Tribulation, found in Matthew 25, Jesus compares Himself to a Shepherd. “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” (v31-33).

The “goats” and the “sheep” are mortals who survive the Time of Jacob’s Trouble. The goats represent unbelievers. They are taking away two with your future judgment. The sheep are the believers who are invited to become the first citizens of the Millennial Kingdom.

We need a quick lesson in Bible math. The descendants of Jacob numbered 70 persons when they went to Goshen. They remained there 400 years and grew to 600,000 able-bodied men, plus women and children when they left to follow Moses.

How many believers will survive the Tribulation? Seventy? 70k? 700,000k? 7mil? More like a couple billion. The Revelation indicates over 50% of population. Current population is 8bil+.

In one thousand years, given perfect conditions, the population will be "whose number *is* as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8).

You are invited to a future feast. It's a wedding feast, called in the Bible, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:7-8).

Church Age believers will be resurrected & raptured. In Heaven, we will receive our rewards and will be "ready." The Great Tribulation ends when Jesus returns with us. A wedding feast on Earth follows, "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Thomas Ice writes, *"Just as the wedding ceremony and the wedding reception of our day are separate events. In fact, these two events are often held at two different locations, just as the marriage of the Lamb will be in Heaven right before the [Return of the King], while the marriage supper of the Lamb will commence with the beginning of the Millennium."*

Until then... **Comfort** one another by emphasizing Jesus' **coming**.