

# “COMFORT, YES, COMFORT MY PEOPLE”

## Isaiah 40-41

### Introduction

- 1) **Chapters 40-66** form the second half of the book of Isaiah
  - a) A shift from the Assyrian period (chs. 1-39) to the future Babylonian period and beyond
- 2) Liberal scholars allege that two other authors after Isaiah wrote this latter part (chs. 40-66)
  - a) Deutero-Isaiah (chs. 40-55) and Trito-Isaiah (chs. 56-66)
  - b) An attack on Bible inspiration by denying that Isaiah prophesied about future events
  - c) NT quotes all parts of book and attributes all authorship to Isaiah (e.g. Matt. 15:7-9 [Isa. 29:13] and Matt. 12:17-21 [Isa. 42:1-4]; Jn. 12:38-41 [Isa. 53:1; 6:10]; Rom. 10:20-21 [Isa. 65:1-2])
- 3) In chapters 40-41, Isaiah’s words provide comfort in our great God who helps and strengthens us

### **I) Comfort and Assurance for God’s People (40:1-11)**

- A) Looking into the future, a time of comfort and pardon is coming for Jerusalem after a time of warfare [against Babylon] and punishment [exile] (vv. 1-2)
- B) Preparation will be made for coming of the Lord – a voice crying in the wilderness (vv. 3-5)
  - 1) Prophecy of John the Baptist and his preparatory work for the Messiah (Matt. 3:1-3; Mk. 1:1-3; Lk. 3:2b-6; Jn. 1:22-23; see also Mal. 3:1)
- C) The word of God stands forever – His word will come true (vv. 6-8; cf. 1 Pet. 1:23-25)
- D) Zion [God’s people] are to proclaim in the high mountain (cf. 2:3) the good news about God’s strong rule [with His arm] as well as His gentle shepherding [with His arm] (vv. 9-11)
  - 1) “Arm” is a symbol of the strength and comfort of the Messiah/God

### **II) The Unique Nature and Greatness of God (40:12-31)**

- A) Who can measure the vastness of creation? Who has instructed Him who already possesses all wisdom and knowledge? No one! (vv. 12-14)
- B) The nations of men are nothing in comparison to the greatness of God (vv. 15-17)
  - 1) The making of idols to be the likeness of God is so foolish (vv. 18-20; cf. Rom. 1:22-23)
- C) “Have you not known? Have you not heard?” (vv. 21, 28; things they should know!)
  - 1) God, who sits in majesty above all, brings great men to nothing (vv. 22-24)
  - 2) See in the creation the Creator that made and sustains it (vv. 25-26; Psa. 19:1; Rom. 1:20)
  - 3) Faithful will not be forgotten, but those who wait on God will be renewed and strengthened by our God who faints not and is unlimited in understanding (vv. 27-31)

### **III) Fear Not, God Brings Help (41:1-20)**

- A) “Who raised up one from the east?” (vv. 1-3) – God would raise up Cyrus, king of Persia (cf. 44:28; 45:1; conquered Babylon in 539 BC)
  - 1) God is claiming the power of prophetic foreknowledge (v. 4; challenge to false gods)
  - 2) Some react by turning to false gods and making idols (vv. 5-7)
- B) Israel is not to fear or be dismayed – God is with them (vv. 10, 13, 14, 20)
  - 1) Special relationship with God – His servant, called, chosen, children of Abraham (vv. 8-9; cf. Ex. 19:5-6; Lev. 25:55; Deut. 7:6-8; same with spiritual Israel today)
  - 2) Enemies will be ashamed and brought to nothing (vv. 11-12)
  - 3) God will use Israel as a threshing tool against their enemies (vv. 15-16)
  - 4) God will open blessings [water and trees] for the poor and needy (vv. 17-20)

### **IV) A Challenge to Vain Idols (41:21-29)**

- A) False idols challenged to prophecy future events to prove their divinity (vv. 21-23)
  - 1) God proves His deity by the prophecy of the coming of King Cyrus (v. 25)
  - 2) Idols cannot tell the future – they are worthless, just wind and confusion (vv. 24, 26-29)

### Conclusion

Spiritual Israel today is helped by God in the strength and protection of the Messiah, Jesus!