

Part II, Lesson 1

Isaiah

The Lord is Salvation

Comfort

My

People

Isaiah

40:1-5

Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex

Curriculum

Isaiah Part II, Lesson 1

Comfort My People

Today we begin the second part of the study of the prophecy of Isaiah, son of Amoz. Some people think that someone other than Isaiah wrote chapters 40-66. They have their reasons. Some think that maybe someone who knew Isaiah well, maybe one of his disciples, wrote these chapters, probably putting some of Isaiah's sermons in writing. However, we will continue to refer to the writer as Isaiah. The fact that it is possible someone else wrote this doesn't mean that God did not inspire it or intend for it to be part of the Bible.* One of the most convincing arguments for Isaiah being the only writer is that in the New Testament, both the early chapters and the later chapters, are quoted as coming from Isaiah. (See, Matthew 3:3; Acts 28:25; Romans 9:27-29; 10:16, 20)

The fortieth chapter of Isaiah begins with the only place in the prophets where the prophet himself is commanded to comfort God's people. In other places prophets are told not to comfort, but to declare judgment on sinners. We have certainly seen a lot of this in the first part of Isaiah. Usually it is God Himself who speaks of and brings comfort to His people. (See 49:13; 51:3, 12; 52:9; and 66:13) Read Isaiah 40:1-2.

The comfort called for here is not just a promise that God is overlooking their sins. The war is over. All Israel's sins are forgiven. They are ready to make a new start.

God uses strong words, "Comfort, comfort my people!" The word comfort is repeated for emphasis. God is insisting that the people be told of His presence with them. They are in a foreign country, they have been made slaves in Babylon. They have no control over their own lives. They have been slaves for many years. Some of them probably thought that they were reliving the Egyptian captivity of their ancestors. They were in a hopeless situation. Most believe that Isaiah was speaking here of the time just before the Persians conquered Babylon.

God now comes to them and promises that they are going to find comfort. Notice that he refers to "my people" and "your God." There was an existing covenant, a formal agreement, between God and Israel. He is their God and they are His people. This is a reaffirming of the covenant after Israel suffered God's judgment for their worship of idols and their mistreatment of the poor and helpless.

Their punishment was over. The past was forgiven and now Israel should look ahead. God instructs his prophet to "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem..." Why was God talking about Jerusalem when the people were captives hundreds of miles away? Well, remember, Jerusalem isn't only the name of a city, it is what the people of God are sometimes called. They were citizens of Judah, and Jerusalem was the capitol of Judah. So when God speaks of Jerusalem He is sometimes speaking of the people of Judah. He has just called them "My People." What a wonderful thing to be called - God's people!

God continues, "Proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed." Some translations of the Bible say, "her warfare is ended." They have been living as war captives. They have been doing hard labor .

Isaiah Part II, Lesson 1

Lesson One—Comfort My People

But, that's all over. They were suffering, as we have said, for their sins. Now, the debt is paid by God on their behalf, and even paid double. God is not going to let them suffer any more.

Then we have a response to this call. Read Isaiah 40:3-5.

We hear about a voice. It is a loud voice clearly calling for the preparation of a highway. The King, God Himself, is coming. He is coming across the desert. If the people in captivity heard this, they thought of the wide and dangerous desert between Babylon and Judah. When God comes, the way should be easily traveled, like that of a king. It was not unusual, in those days, for a large group of workers to go ahead of the king, clearing trash off the highway, making sure that there were not obstacles which would slow the king down or make his trip uncomfortable.

The low places were to be filled, and the high places, hills or mountains, were to be leveled. The places where the highway had grown rough or rutted, were to be levelled. God was coming, and the people should be prepared. Now, is this really something that the people would do in the desert, or it is more a symbolic picture of what should happen in the hearts of the people?

God was coming to lead them back to Judah and their homeland. When the highway was finished, they would see the “glory of the Lord.”

Here we are told that God's promise was not for Israel alone. The glory of the Lord was going to be revealed to “all mankind.” That includes everyone. Israel thought that they had a monopoly on God and no other people were loved and blessed by God. But, the prophets made it very clear that God's love reached everyone.

The glory of God is revealed in how He takes care of His people. Thousands of the people of Judah had been taken captive and marched many miles through the desert to become slaves in Babylon. This happened in 586 BC. The time Isaiah is talking about here is many years later when Babylon was conquered by the Persians, and the Persian king Cyrus was letting all the captives taken by the Babylonians go back home. The people of Judah saw this as the hand of God at work. His glory was showing. There are many other things in Scripture that show the glory of God. The most wonderful is when He sent Jesus, His Son, to earth to live a perfect life and die carrying our sins on His back.

*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

Page Three

Scripture Memory: “A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.” Isaiah 40:3

Lesson Goal: To introduce the student to the second part of Isaiah...and God's promise of being with His people.

Isaiah Part II, Lesson 1

Lesson One—Comfort My People

Student Worksheet

Listen during the lesson for this information:

1. The fact that it is possible someone else wrote the _____ of Isaiah doesn't mean that God did not _____ it or intend for it to be part of the _____.
2. What were the sins for which Israel was being punished during their captivity in Babylon?
3. What did God call the people in verse one, and how did He refer to Himself?
4. What was the "loud voice" calling for in verse three?
5. What was to be done to make the highway just right for the king?
6. For whom was the glory of the Lord revealed?
7. The glory of God is revealed in how He takes care of His _____.
8. Which king was letting the war captives go home?
9. What is the greatest picture of God's glory?

Page Four

Scripture Memory: "A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." Isaiah 40:3

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God's Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus' name. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.