



## **AWESOME GOD - Isaiah 40:1-3; Luke 1:8-17**

Bob Nance (14/08/2022)

---

### **Introduction**

Over the last few months, Becky, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has been leading us through the Book of James, expanding on some of the themes in the Book. Things such as, how do we react in times of trouble; we have two ears and one mouth, so listen attentively before you speak; pride goes before a fall, humility is a virtue; check where your wisdom comes from, is it from heaven or is it from the devil; and the tongue can be terribly destructive if it not used properly.

But today I am going to break away from “James” and try to show you how some of these issues have and can apply to our lives as we work our way through Isaiah 40. Throughout the first 39 chapters of Isaiah, God deals mainly with the judgement of Israel, but now in chapter 40, the tone changes completely.

Let’s work our way through these verses and see what we can find in them.

Verses 1 and 2 read.

*“Comfort, yes comfort My people!” says your God. 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 of her sins.”*

Now when we use the word “comfort” in this day and age, it brings to mind something like a warm cuddly, or helping someone get through a difficult time, but in Isaiah’s time it meant to strengthen or to encourage, and here it was to encourage His people, Israel.

Verse 2 has been seen as prophetic to the second coming of the Messiah, Jerusalem will no longer be at war and the nation as a whole will have repented and recognised Jesus as God’s Son come to rule the world. Therefore, their iniquity has now been pardoned and they have been reinstated as God’s chosen people.

This can also refer to the time when the Israelites return from Babylon and God now passes judgement on Babylon because they overdid God’s judgement on the Israelites so God will now punish them.

Now in verses 3 to 5 we have reference to John the Baptist. He was the voice crying in the wilderness and was preparing the way for the One who was to come after him, Jesus. He was to prepare the hearts of the people to receive with gladness the message of the kingdom of God. He was to level out the path for people to come to Jesus with open hearts

and minds, and he was to “go on before the LORD in the Spirit and Power of Elijah.”(Luke 1 : 17). Jesus also refers to John as Elijah.

But Elijah is to come again. In Malachi 4: 5 it says. *“Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”* This great and dreadful day of the Lord is when Jesus comes back to earth to judge the nations. So, before this time, God will send Elijah back to make straight and level, the path to Jesus similar to John the Baptist.

Now in verses 6 to 8, God through Isaiah, shows the frailty of man. We are like a blip in time, like grass and flowers which are here one day and gone the next. But unlike man “.. *the Word of our God stands forever*”. (v 8). These words were confirmed by Jesus in Luke 21:33 where He says *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away”*. Yes, *“they will stand forever”*. What God has said will never change, His promises are sure, and His prophecies will all come to pass.

The words in verses 1 to 8 were given to show the people of Israel that God had not forsaken them and that they were still His treasured possession. Even though He had to discipline them, He still loved them and He would always care for them. This was real encouragement.

The permanence of God and all He has said, brings comfort and encouragement to me. The fact that in God’s word Jesus said *“I assure you, most solemnly tell you, he who believes in Me (who adheres to, trusts in, relies on, and has faith in Me) has eternal life”* (John 6 : 47 Amp).

Yes, I have eternal life because I have put my trust and faith in Jesus. I put my faith and trust in Jesus one Sunday morning in 1985. I had grown up in the church and over about 42 years, had learnt about Jesus, yet deep within my heart, I knew I was on the way to hell. Although I was a regular at church, I was involved with activities that did not honour God, and which drew me away from God. Max Black, from our Revesby church, organised sign language classes with TAFE at our Padstow church. As I became involved in learning “sign”, I became less and less involved with my other activities. This was how God was preparing my heart and getting my attention.

Early in March 1985, I had a terrible week; I nearly wrecked some family relationships, and also, my wife wanted to be baptised by immersion; no way. On Tuesday of that week, I asked Marj if she prayed for me (what I wanted was to ask her to pray for me) and her answer was “yes”. I started reading my Bible on Wednesday and what I read was “good stuff” then on Sunday the reading was Psalm 51. For those who know me, poetry is not my thing, I don’t like it and I can’t understand it. When I saw the reading was a Psalm (poetry) I cried out to God that if He wanted me to understand what was written, He would have to show me. As I read, somehow, I went from sitting on the side of the bed to kneeling on the floor with tears streaming down my cheeks. In that instant, I knew my sins were forgiven and that God loved me. The next day it dawned on me that I was now a child of God and my name was written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Three weeks later, both Marj and I were baptised by immersion.

Because I am now a Child of God, my hope of eternal life is rock solid. I have a rock-solid hope. This hope does not rest on what I have done to achieve it, but I rest in the knowledge that Jesus has taken my sin upon Himself, He has taken the punishment and penalty I deserved, and covered me with His righteousness. When I hear about people who have

committed suicide, it really saddens me, because, if they had known Jesus, they would have had a sure hope and someone to live for.

Verse 11 introduces the picture of a Shepherd who looks after the needs of his flock. A shepherd's job was to provide protection to the sheep and find safe food and lodging for them each day. His job was to care for them in every way. And here Isaiah tells the Israelites that God, as their Shepherd, will care for them in every way.

I have found this to be the case in my life. There have been a number of times when it has been obvious that God has been with me, caring for me. One case in particular, I had taken on the job of Sunday School Superintendent, and I felt very inadequate for this position, but I knew God had placed me there. What I didn't know was that teaching material that was needed within a month had not been ordered and always came in from overseas which meant a 2 to 3 month delay. One of God's servants knew of the need and alerted me to it. When I rang the distributors, it just so happened that God had gone before me, and that they had sufficient material in stock for our needs.

To further encourage the Israelites, in verse 9, God says

*O Zion, you who bring good tidings. Get up into the mountains; 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 going to be where the good news is to be proclaimed after Christ's second coming. After the tribulation, all Israel will turn to Jesus and the message from Jerusalem will be "Behold your God" in other words, Jesus has returned. With these words "Behold your God". God was about to show why the Israelites could be comforted or encouraged in their relationship with Him. They are going to be shown just how awesome is the God of the universe, how majestic His glory, how complete His knowledge and how perfect His will.

Now the Living bible paraphrases verses 12 to 14 as follows

*Who else has held the oceans in His hands  
and measured off the heavens with His ruler?  
Who else knows the weight of all the earth  
and weighs the mountains and hills?  
Who can advise the Spirit of the LORD  
or be His teacher or give Him counsel?  
Has He ever needed anyone's advice?  
Did He need instruction as to what is right and best?*

These verses describe the overwhelming glory of God. He needs absolutely nothing from anyone. No one can compare to Him. No one can give Him advice or counsel. He is utterly and totally sovereign. If the Israelites ever needed to realise just how great was their God, then here it is.

I love these verses and the song that was created from them. My heart rejoices and soars to the heavens as I meditate on how great and awesome is my God. These words were sent to Israel as God's chosen people, but as one of God's Gentile children I claim them for myself and all those who have given their life to Jesus. There is no one like Him or can be compared to Him, and Yet, He loves me and cares for me and one day I will see Him in paradise.

And now He compares himself with man. All the people of the world are just like a speck of dust, we are almost infinitesimal in comparison to His greatness, like dust on a set of scales. There are no sacrifices that can adequately honour His majesty and glory. Even all the timber in the forests of Lebanon would be insufficient fuel for the sacrifices to honour Him, nor would there be enough animals in their forests to honour Him as the sacrifice He deserves.

Well, how can we describe God or what can we compare Him to? Verses 18 to 20 show how ludicrous it is to try and compare Him to an idol. Impoverished people might make an idol from a piece of timber and more affluent people could make a casting of an idol and cover it with gold, but neither is able to help in any situation.

Then in verses 21 to 24 God continues to reinforce the fact that man is very insignificant in comparison to His might and power and that the people should remember that earthly kingdoms come and go at God's command. He further makes comparison between Himself and man in verses 25 and 26. He says, look around you, look up at the sky, at the sun, the moon and the stars. Who created all of these things. With My might and power I put them all in place and not one is missing.

Now in verse 27 we have a complaint from Israel. They are complaining that they are being neglected by God and He doesn't care about them or their problems. God quickly puts them in their place and replies in verse 28

*Have you not known, have you not heard,  
the everlasting God, the Lord the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
Neither faints nor is weary, His understanding is unsearchable. (v28 ESV)*

Wow, He says I created everything, I know all things, nothing happens that I am not aware of, and I understand the problems you are experiencing, so how can you say you are neglected and I don't care about you.

In verses 29 to 31 God explains the solution to the complaint.

*He gives power to the weak,  
and to those who have no might He increases strength.  
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.*

God says He is prepared to give power and strength, but there is a condition we have to meet, and that is, *"we must wait on the Lord"*

So what does "waiting on the Lord" look like? When we are embroiled in life's suffering and difficulties, we are tempted to follow what the Israelites did and complain to God. You are neglecting me, You don't understand, what's going on, You don't care that I'm suffering and I have no way out, etc. instead of "Waiting" on God. When we look to our own devices and resources, we have taken our eyes off the One who is supreme, who created all things and who knows our every situation, the all powerful, caring God, the One in whom we can trust, the One in whom our hope rests. And when we fix our eyes on Him, and seek His face, He will renew our strength and we will soar like eagles, we will run and not be weary and we will walk and not faint.