SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

A Study of Isaiah - #16

HISTORICAL TRANSITION OF EMPIRES Isaiah 36-39

High-Level Outline

I. Sovereign Judgment of All (1-39) A. Judgment on Judah (1-6) B. Judgment on Judah and Her Invaders (7-12) C. Judgment against Heathen Nations (13-27) D. Woes against Jerusalem (28-35) E. Transition of Threatening Empires (36-39) **II.** God's Salvation of Zion (40-66) A. Superiority of Jehovah over Idols (40-48) B. "Things That Make for Peace" (49-57) C. Establishment of Zion (58-66)

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY FORETOLD

Isaiah 39:1-8

An Unanswered Question

Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a lump of figs, and apply it as a poultice on the boil, and he <u>shall</u> recover." And Hezekiah had said, "What is the <u>sign</u> that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?" (38:21-22)

In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the LORD; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah. Hezekiah had very great riches and honor. And he made himself treasuries for silver, for gold ... Hezekiah prospered in all his works. However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, **God withdrew from him, in order to test him**, that He might know all that was in his heart. (2 Chr. 32:24-31)

Really Bad Guys

11) Assuming Isaiah's chapters are relatively sequential, why should Hezekiah have been so very careful and wary of the ambassadors from Babylon (39:1)?

At that time Merodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, **king of <u>Babylon</u>**, sent letters and a **present to Hezekiah**, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. (**39:1**)

• Isaiah had already foretold:

• Nation of sinners, wicked, evil, arrogant, proud, haughty (13:9, 11; 14:9-14).

Governed by oppressors, terrible, struck with a continual stroke, ruled nations in anger, made the earth tremble, shook kingdoms, made the world a wilderness, destroyed its cities, would not release prisoners, destroyed his own land, killed his own people (14:4-6, 16-17, 20).

Responsible for threshing Isaiah's people (21:9-10).

Earth rejoices at their destruction (14:7-8).

Targets of God's indignation, destruction, wrath, anger, desolation (13:5-6, 19-22; 14:1-4, 22-23; 21:9-10).

be destroyed by the Medes (13:17; 21:2).

"Not Associate with Flatterer"

12) What failing does Hezekiah demonstrate in his reception of them (39:2)? Does this make Hezekiah responsible for the future Babylonian captivity (39:3-7)?

And Hezekiah was <u>pleased</u> with them, and showed them the house of his treasures – the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory – <u>all</u> that was found among his treasures. There was <u>nothing</u> in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did <u>not show them</u>. (39:2)

Common human failing:

Everyone wants friends, allies they can trust.

Everyone likes people – tends to trust people, who are "nice" to them.

Never trust flatterers, gifters (Pr.26:23-28; 29:4-5; 20:19; Ps.12).

Learn to balance diplomacy, openness with caution, carefulness without becoming paranoid, judgmental, cynical (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Ambassadors not always honest (Jos. 9:3-27). Should have inquired be Ford (Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 23:1-13; 30:8).

"Flattering mouth works ruin"

 12) What failing does Hezekiah demonstrate in his reception of them (39:2)? Does this make Hezekiah responsible for the future Babylonian captivity (39:3-7)?

Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?" So Hezekiah said, "They came to me from a far country, from Babylon." And he said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them." Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 'Behold, the **days are coming** when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to **Babylon**; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. 'And they shall take away some of your **sons** who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (39:3-7) No. aiready foretold (21:9-10; Deu. 28:37, 41, 45-67). kes pride by identifying future destroyers (2. Chr. 36:17-18).

Major Themes of Isaiah

- Salvation is of the Lord, <u>not</u>:
 - Unrestrained Passion
 - Greed, Materialism
 - Unmerciful, Lawless Injustice
 - Idolatry
 - Assyria
 - Egypt
 - Babylon
 - All the kingdoms and peoples of the world joined together (**Proverbs 16:5**).
 - "Good" Kings and Heroes of Faith Man in any shape, form, fashion, organization or arrangement



One Day at a Time

- 13) What does Hezekiah's responses to Isaiah and the Lord's message indicate about him (39:3-8)? What applications can we make four ourselves?
- So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!" For he said, "At least there will be peace and truth in my days." (39:8)
- Kept pride fully in check, restrained ... Accepted the message.
- Did not blaspheme, charge God with injustice, become angry at God.
- "Good" (towb) good, excellent (Gn. 1:25, 31); appropriate, fitting (Ecc. 7:11, 18; 5:17; 2 Sam. 17:14, 17) [BDB].
 - Leaves the occasion and justification of punishment in God's hands. As a "silver lining", appreciates the blessings provided today (**Mat. 6:33-34**).
 - Likewise, we must learn to be thankful for the blessings we have today James 1:17), and learn to accept God's wisdom, judgment, balance Copine in others (Mat. 7:9-11; Pro. 30:7-9; Heb. 12:1-16).

GOD'S SALVATION OF ZION

Isaiah 40-66

SUPERIORITY OF JEHOVAH OVER MATIONS' IDOES Isaiah 40-48

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ANNOUNCING THE COMING OF THE LORD

Isaiah 40:1-11

Two Big Conditions

• All prophecies foretelling the potential blessings of returning from Babylonian captivity were predicated upon a condition:

"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. ... The LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ... I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; Deut. 30:1-19

Three-Fold Comfort

"Comfort, yes, ²comfort My people!" Says your God. "Speak 3comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her ..." (40:1-2a)

- Why would the topic of "comfort" be so important for the readers of Isaiah? Consider previous chapters and the Jews serving the events foretold in those chapters.
 - The following discouraged, wearied people would need such comfort: a. Survivors of the Assyrian invasion.
 - b. Righteous remnant suffering & enduring ungodly Manasseh and others.
 - c. Survivors in Babylonian captivity, whose gods "triumphed"?!
 - d. Remnant returning from Babylonian captivity to rebuild temple, walls & city.e. Righteous remnant suffering persecution & enduring until Messiah.Tempted to:
 - Worship idols of those around them.
- Accept conquering idols were stronger than Jehovah.
 - Feel alone, that God had failed, forgotten, or abandoned them.
 - el insignificant, as if their faith & labor did not really matter.

"Voice Crying in the Wilderness"

2) When were the events of Isaiah 40:1-8 fulfilled? How can Isaiah speak of *"her iniquity"* being *"pardoned" – past tense – if the events were then in the future (40:2)? How did she receive "double for all her sins" (40:2)?* Was she over punished?

"... 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." The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." 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. The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (40:2-8)

"Voice Crying in the Wilderness"

- 2) When were the events of Isaiah 40:1-8 fulfilled? How can Isaiah speak of *"her iniquity"* being *"pardoned" past tense if the events were then in the future (40:2)? How did she receive "double for all her sins" (40:2)?* Was she over punished?
- Looks to Messianic era, specifically forerunner preparing the way for Jesus (Mark 1:1-11; Mat. 3:1-10; Luke 3:1-18; John 1:19-37).
- Uses *prophetic perfect* tense– speaks as although already accomplished (**Rom. 4:17**). In a sense, it was (**1 Pet. 1:20**).
- *"Double"* refers to a balancing of the scales need twice as much to balance. God would satisfy the scales of justice for His people forgive sins (Jer. 16:17-18; Rev. 18:4-6; Zec. 9:12; not to be confused with, Exo. 22:4-15).

"Word of God Stands Forever"

3) How did the message of the "one crying in the wilderness" correspond to his foretold agenda (40:3-9; Malachi 3:1-4; 4:4-6) and execution of it (Matthew 3:1-17; 11:1-20; 17:12-13; 21:23-32)?

... The grass withers, the flower fades, But the **word of our God** <u>stands forever</u>." 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!" (40:8-9)

John the Baptist would:

Soften hearts, prepare people to listen (Mark 1:3-5; Mat. 3:3; Mal. 4:4-6). Give them hope, remind them of the unfulfilled promises – "all flesh is grass ... the word of our God stands forever" (Mat. 3:1-3; Mal. 4:5-6; 1 Peter 1:17-25).

"Refine the sons of Levi", purify through strong rebuke (Mal. 3:1-4; Mat. 3:5-12; 21:23-32; Luke 3:7-14).

ow people God" (Jn. 1:29-37; 14:9; Mt. 1:23; also, Acts 18:24-19:5).

Meekness and Majesty

4) What diametrically opposed characteristics are exhibited in this proclamation of God (40:10-11)? Please provide an example of each characteristic just from the ministry of Jesus.

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. 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. (40:10-11)

Strength in:

Miracles (Mark 4:36-41; John 6:1-21; 10:25)

Knowledge (Matthew 5-7; 22:15-46)

• Words (Mark 2:1-12; Matthew 23:1-39)

Gentle with:

Young (Matthew 19:12-15; 18:1-14; Luke 18:15-17) Ignorant (Luke 9:51-56; 23:34) Peritent sinners (Luke 15:1-32) Specifie (Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-34)

THE INCOMPARABLE

Isaiah 40:12-41:29

GOD

"To whom will you liken God?"

 5) Although discussed in more detail later, what was the immediate failure and futility of creating an image in God's likeness as discussed in 40:12-26?

"Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance?²Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him? With ³whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? ⁴Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a **drop in a bucket**, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. <u>To whom then will you liken God? Or what</u> likeness will you compare to Him? (40:12-18)

He created and surpasses all we know and see – unlike anything we know. There is no image "big" enough to represent Him (Acts 17:23-31)!
There is no image "big" enough to gether that can overpower Him!

"Lift up your eyes on high ..."

The workman molds an image. The goldsmith overspreads it with gold, And the silversmith casts silver chains. Whoever is too impoverished for such a contribution Chooses a tree that will not rot; He seeks for himself a skillful workman To prepare a carved image that will not totter. Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. Scarcely shall they be planted, Scarcely shall they be sown, Scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, When He will also blow on them, And they will wither, And the whirlwind will take them away like stubble. "To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing. (40:19-26)

to make image that cannot stand of one who sits above all, created all.

"With Wings Like Eagles"

6) What answers and comfort were provided to those who felt that God had overlooked them and their case (**40:27-31**)? How much of this encouragement applies to us today?

Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the LORD, And my just claim is passed over by my God"? 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. 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. (40:27-31) Go back to the "beginning" (Exodus, Canaan's Conquest, Psalms ...). All-knowing, all-powerful; time-table is not ours (8:17; 25:9; 30:18). Cimilar hope - spiritual (Rom. 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phi. 4:13)?

"Be of Good Courage"!?

7) How did the Lord silence the claim of the *"coastlands"*, and how did they respond (**41:1-7**)?

"Keep silence before Me, O coastlands, And let the people renew their strength! Let them come near, then let them speak; Let us come near together for judgment. ¹Who raised up one from the east? ²Who in righteousness called him to His feet? ³Who gave the nations before him, And made him rule over kings? 4 Who gave them as the dust to his sword, As driven stubble to his bow? Who pursued them, and passed safely By the way that he had not gone with his feet? **5Who** has performed and done it, **Calling the** generations from the beginning? 'I, the LORD, am the first; And with the last I am He." The coastlands saw it and feared. The ends of the earth were afraid; They drew near and came. Everyone helped his **neighbor**, And said to his brother, "**Be of good courage**!" So the **craftsman encouraged the goldsmith**; He who smooths with the hammer **inspired him** who strikes the anvil, Saying, "It is ready for the soldering"; Then he fastened it with pegs, That it might not totter. (41:1-7) cointed to his providential, prophetic and physical power to declare a king to

ile over the nations.... Pagans doubled-down on their idolatry, rebellion.

"Of Abraham My Friend"

8) As a parenthesis, what special treatment did Israel receive and why (**41:8-20**)? Incidentally, what general requirements were expected of them?

"But you, Israel, are <u>My servant</u>, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its farthest regions, And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away: Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' Behold, all those who were incensed against you Shall be ashamed and disgraced; They shall be as nothing, And those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them – Those who contended with you. Those who war against you Shall be as nothing, As a nonexistent thing." (41:8-12)

Abraham's seed, recipients of his promise, God would protect them huist house the coust as He (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18; Lev. 11:44-45).

"That may see and know"

For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.' Fear not, you worm Jacob, You men of Israel! I will help you," says the LORD And your Redeemer, the Holy One of **Israel**. Behold, I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth; You shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, And make the hills like chaff. You shall winnow them, the wind shall carry them away, And the whirlwind shall scatter them; You shall rejoice in the LORD, And glory in the Holy One of Israel. The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, Their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, And fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, And the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, The myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine And the box tree together, That they may see and know, And consider and understand together, That the hand of the LORD has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it. (41:8-20)

blessing Israel, combined with their thankfulness, would exalt God.

"Do Good or Do Evil"

9) Returning to the claims of the "coastlands", what did the Lord emphasize to bolster his case against the idols (41:21-29)?
"Present your case," says the LORD. "Bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them;

Or declare to us <u>things to come</u>. Show the things that are to come hereafter, <u>That</u> we may <u>know that you are gods</u>; Yes, do good or do evil, <u>That</u> we may be dismayed and see it together. Indeed you are nothing, And your work is nothing; <u>He who chooses</u> you is an abomination. (41:21-29)

Returning to "His case", only God can explain the past *and* predict the future!

Like Elijah, taunts them to *just do something* to generate fear, conviction (1 Kings 18:17-40; 1 Samuel 5:1-6:5).

tien who choose such are an abomination (Deu. 7:25-26; 18:9-14).

"Declared from the Beginning"

9) Returning to the claims of the *"coastlands"*, what did the Lord emphasize to bolster his case against the idols (**41:21-29**)?

I have raised up one from the north, And he shall come; From the rising of the sun he shall call on My name; And he shall come against princes as though mortar, As the potter treads clay. Who has declared from the beginning, that we may know? And former times, that we may say, 'He is righteous'? Surely there is no one who shows, Surely there is no one who declares, Surely there is no one who hears your words. The first time I said to Zion, 'Look, there they are!' And I will give to Jerusalem one who brings good tidings. For I looked, and there was no man; I looked among them, but there was no counselor, Who, when I asked of them, could answer a word. Indeed they are all worthless; Their works are nothing; Their molded images are wind and confusion. (41:21-29) God would raise Cyrus who would "call on" Him (44-45; Ezra 1:1-4).

a Persian, he was from *"east"* of Babylon, but he first conquered in the *"north"* uniting them into one empire.