

Title: Prepare Ye the Way

Text: Is 40: 3-5

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The previous 39 chapters of Isaiah included prophecy concerning Christ. There was *some* comfort but mostly judgment and warning. But beginning in Isaiah 40, the message is predominately the good news of Christ, full of comfort and blessing, full of the glory of God in Christ. After looking at the first two verse of chapter 40, now we come to verses 3-5.

Isaiah 40: 3: The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4: Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

Christ said through Malachi,

Malachi 3:1: Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

So our text applies to John the Baptist

Matthew 3:1: In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2: And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3: For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

THE CRY IN THE WILDERNESS

Isaiah 40: 3: The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Our Savior did not send John the Baptist into Jerusalem. He sent him crying in the wilderness. Why? Chapter 39 ended with the declaration that Jerusalem would be carried captive into Babylon. It happened for 70 years. But by the time John the Baptist came, the children of Judah were in spiritual captivity. Organized religion of the scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem *was Babylon*. John the Baptist crying in the wilderness is like the gospel coming to the unregenerate sinner who *is* the wilderness.

They gloried in the temple. Sinners glory in self, in their church buildings. But Christ is the temple. He is not worshipped in temples made with hands. The Spirit of God makes his regenerated child to be the temple of God. His temple is his church. Together Christ makes us living stones built up a spiritual house.

Ephesians 2: 20: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

1 Peter 2: 5: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

They gloried in their act of bringing the lamb. When we were unregenerate sinners we gloried in our so-called sacrificial acts and our religious works. But Christ is the Lamb. John the Baptist pointed to the Lord Jesus and cried,

John 1: 29...Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

They gloried in the earthly priest. Carnal religion still glories in earthly priests. Many in churches glory in their preacher. But Christ is the High Priest who that office typified. He alone makes his people kings and priests unto God.

Hebrews 9: 11: But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

Revelation 1: 5...Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6: And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5: 6: And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7: And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8: And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9: And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood

out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10: And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

So the Lord sent John the Baptist to cry in the wilderness because Christ sends his preacher crying *to* sinners who *are* the wilderness. He makes his people entirely new by his works

SENT TO PREPARE THE WAY

Isaiah 40: 3: The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4: Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

John was sent to prepare the way for Christ. In days of kings, they would send a crier ahead, announcing the entrance of the king into the city. Before Christ the King comes into his child, he sends his preacher declaring the gospel of Christ to prepare the way. The preparation is made in the heart by the Spirit; it is compared to building a road in a desert—"*make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*" The dry dead sinner is the desert.

The idea is that the LORD is coming to His people as a triumphant King, who has the highway prepared before him so he enters in in all his glory. God the Spirit prepares the new heart through the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Building a road takes an expert engineer, expert builders. God is the expert builder of this road. It is costly to build a highway. It cost our Redeemer his precious blood to prepare this way.

When building a road they face many different problems. So it is with preparing the new heart. So it is with the Lord keeping our heart the rest of our days. These are the things the Spirit of God works when he first calls his child and throughout the life of faith

"*Every valley shall be exalted.*" This speaks of the work our Lord does in the heart of every elect, redeemed child of God. When the Spirit of God reveals to us that we are the sinner, we become the valley. When we are down by being made to see our sin is against God and brought down by the guilt of our sin we become the valley. Likewise, as believer's, when our sins are ever before us, when we mourn and cry for God's mercy as David did then we are the valley. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Spirit of God comforts us with the good news for his elect Jerusalem. "Her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardon, the Lord has rewarded you double for all your sins." Christ enters in and exalts us out of the valley.

Isaiah 6: 1: The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

"*Every mountain and hill shall be made low.*" In our self-righteousness we are mountains and hills. Someone said, "But we are only ant hills, mole hills and dung hills." The gospel that our sin is our self-righteousness, our pride. Imagining that we, the sinner, accept Jesus is pride. Do you see here that the whole work is the work of Christ making us accepted of God? Imagining that God will receive us by our works is pride. All our righteousness's are filthy rags. God only accepts us in the righteousness of dear Son. So the mountains and the hills must be made low. Through the gospel Christ brings us down.

Zechariah 4: 6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. 7 Who *art* thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel *thou shalt become* a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone *thereof with* shoutings, *crying*, Grace, grace unto it.

"*The crooked shall be made straight.*" The Spirit of God makes us behold our malice, our guile, our hypocrisy, and envy and evil speaking in stealing Christ's glory. By nature man is crooked. We all tried to rob Christ of his glory. Natural man envies Christ getting all the glory. So in our false religion we spoke evil of Christ. We said he loves everybody. We said he laid down his life for everybody. We said he really did not accomplish redemption and that is up to the sinner to make his blood effectual. That is stealing Christ's glory. We tried to steal his glory in doing the very work our text speaks of: in making a new, holy heart and in making us righteous. We took that glory to ourselves saying we made ourselves be born-again. Or we stole his glory by saying we made ourselves righteous and holy by our works and our great, grand self-denial. But the self we could never deny is this vain self-justifying, self-sanctifying man within our sin-nature.

The sinful heart hates Christ. By nature we will not and cannot submit to the word of God. It takes the Spirit of God creating a new man within. It takes the Spirit of God revealing Christ in us. He makes us honest to confess that all I am is sin. He must us make us restore that which we have stolen. Like Zacchaeus, he makes us restore and give God all the glory in Christ. We stop stealing his glory and claiming we made ourselves righteous and holy and we start glorying only in his works. I must be found in Christ's righteousness alone. Christ is my Sanctifier. He sent the gospel. He made the crooked straight. The heart is purified through faith by beholding Christ in all his glory!

"*The rough places made plain.*" God promised to take out the stony heart and give a heart of flesh. It is a tender heart. It is a humble heart, a broken and contrite heart, a meek and quiet spirit in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is heart who loves

Christ and loves our brethren. It is a merciful, forgiving heart because we see how merciful God has been to us for Christ's sake. We see how much he has forgiven us for Christ's sake. This work is done by the Holy Spirit. It is done through the preaching of the gospel.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD REVEALED

Isaiah 40: 5: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

When this work is done in a sinner is by Christ being revealed in the new heart through God-given faith. This is by divine revelation—"*The glory of the LORD shall be revealed.*"

Romans 1: 16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The glory revealed is Christ our Wisdom, our Righteousness, our Sanctification and Redemption.

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Christ and his Righteousness is the glory of God. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4 that when God shines the Light, he reveals the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. When he makes us behold the Lamb of God through faith, we behold the glory of the LORD. When they were stoning Stephen,

Acts 7:55: But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,...

God gave Christ the glory of being Salvation to all God's elect. What is the glory of the LORD revealed in Christ unto us? The glory is how Christ fulfilled the law. He fulfilled the covenant. Christ made his people righteous and sanctified and accepted in him. Pay attention to Exodus 19: 5. When God gave the law at Sinai, he said,

Exodus 19: 5: Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

But when the mountain shook and was on fire, they ran back and asked Moses to be the Mediator for them between them and God, lest they die. That is what happens when God makes us hear the law. That is what we do. We ask Christ to be our Mediator to make us accepted of God.

Galatians 3:24: Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25: But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

No fallen son of Adam ever kept God's covenant—the covenant is God's holy law. The law was put in the ark under the mercy seat under the blood. Christ said, "Thy law is in my heart. I came to do thy will o God" It is by Christ's will that we are sanctified through the offering of Christ once. (Read Hebrews 10)

Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is the servant of the Father. The word he declared at Sinai is the word Christ fulfilled. He heard the Father say, Exodus 19: 5, "If ye obey my voice and keep my covenant then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." Christ said, "I will do it for them."

When he reveals his glory—that Christ obeyed and kept his covenant and fulfilled the law for his people—he gives us faith to rest in him. In and by Christ, we are what God said we would be. This is what Exodus 19 said we would be. This is what Christ makes us by his obedience imputed to us through faith.

1 Peter 2:9: But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

We came short of the glory of God—the righteousness and holiness of God. But this glory of being Salvation for his people is the glory God gave Christ before the foundation of the world. The glory of being our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption is the glory Christ said he gave his disciples and gives to us to make us one with the Father in him.

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me [his glory of being the Righteousness of his people] I have given them; [through faith he gives us his Righteousness] that they may be one, even as we are one:

That is how Christ is the Messenger of the everlasting covenant of grace. That is how he prepares the way.

"*All flesh shall see it together.*" All his elect shall see him—Jew and Gentile—shall see Christ by faith and be saved. There is no possibility this shall not be. The certainty of this word is because "*the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*"

Amen!