

# God's Message to Us in Isaiah 40-66

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## Introduction

Last week, we came to Isaiah in our sermon series in which I am preaching at least one sermon on each book of the Bible.

- Isaiah is one of those books that I am preaching two sermons on.
- There is so much here, and this book lends itself well to two sermons.

As I mentioned last week, at chapter 40, there is a change in the book, in which Isaiah takes up the subject of what God will do after the Babylonian exile.

- As I also mentioned, this does not mean that someone other than Isaiah wrote from this point on.
  - That is a common view, but it is rooted in the unbelief of those who do not think it possible for a prophet to refer to a person born over a hundred years after them by name as Isaiah named Cyrus.
  - Such a view should be rejected by all of us who believe the prophets truly spoke by the Holy Spirit—that God gave them visions and understanding from above—
    - In the New Testament, Jesus and the His Apostles refer to Isaiah as the author of the entire book.
      - Now while it *could* be argued that they might say “Isaiah wrote” in a loose way, this is not likely...
  - And when you add to that the fact that in chapters 40-66,
    - God expressly distinguishes Himself as the only God who tells what will happen before it happens, and the example He uses is raising up Cyrus to overthrow Babylon and to send His people back to build Jerusalem and its temple, it is even less likely!
    - The skeptics and deniers are denying the very thing that God Himself has given us to show us that He is not like the idols of the nations!
      - What sort of arrogance is it that allows them to confidently assert that the living God is unable to reveal future events, especially when He has done it in such remarkable and verifiable way—such as His testimony that when the Messiah came, people from all nations would come to serve Him?

I just wanted to clear that up at the beginning because in Isaiah chapter 40-66,

- we have some remarkable prophetic material that claims to be declaring the future.
- And if it is not, it loses its ability to give us (or the original recipients) hope.

In a most tender, pastoral, way, the LORD is reaching out to prepare His elect people in Israel for the Babylonian exile.

- You see, God had told godly King Hezekiah that the Babylonians were going to completely destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and that they would even overthrow the throne of David, taking his sons into captivity in a foreign land.
  - It was extremely difficult for the elect people among the masses in Israel to hear such a thing—for they knew that the Messiah was to be the Son of David.
    - How could the throne of David be overthrown?
    - And how could the temple, which God had miraculously upheld when the Assyrians invaded all the kingdoms—remember how we saw that last week: God

stopped them when they got to Jerusalem by sending an angel to kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in the night—how could that temple be overthrown before the Messiah came?

- But now the same prophet (Isaiah) who had told them that Jerusalem would not be taken by the King of Assyria has told them the Jerusalem *would* be taken by the Babylonians and that the throne of David would fail!
  - What was to become of the nation of Israel and the promises of salvation that God had made to them, if they were to be destroyed before the Messiah came?
- That is the subject of Isaiah chapter 40 through 66!
  - God is telling His people what the outcome of the exile will be—
    - He is telling them of the beautiful, glorious, marvellous outcome of the most difficult days of their history!

Talk about a message for us!

- Not only do we have the lesson here that even in the darkest times of church history, God is still as committed as ever to bringing His salvation to us if we are among His elect people...
  - In these chapters, we also have beautiful revelation about the glories of our Saviour so that we can delight in Him; and of our Saviour's work so we can delight in it.
    - He even tells us of glorious things that are yet future to us.

So let's explore this wonderful part of Isaiah.

### **I. First, learn here how God comforts His elect people.**

- Chapter 40 opens with the very words: **“Comfort, yes, comfort My people, says your God.”**
  - How is Isaiah to comfort them?
  - There are two parts to it—
    - The first part is that God will not remain angry with them forever!
    - The second part is that God Himself will come to them.

Let's look at each of these.

#### **A. First, that God will not remain angry with us forever.**

1. The church had been extremely wicked—and the elect people knew that better than anyone.
  - God had every reason to destroy Jerusalem and to overthrow the throne of David.
  - Even though He had sent prophets to plead with them, and even though He had chastened them in more gentle ways, they had not repented (as we saw in chap. 1).
2. But the comfort was that the time would come when God would see them under His rod of discipline and say, “It is enough.”
  - Look how it is expressed in verse 2 of Isaiah 40: **“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 her sins.”**
  - Receiving double means that they would have fully paid—
    - They would have been punished enough.
    - The wonderful day would come when He would lift their punishment.

- Our comfort is that when the LORD chastens us as His sons, such a day will always come.
  - The punishment will cease.
  - Our sorrow will be turned to joy and our mourning to dancing.
- 3. This has many fulfillments in our lives as individuals, as congregations, as Christian nations, and even in the world wide church.
  - but the ultimate fulfillment was when Jesus Himself suffered on the cross for all of us and then said, “It is finished!”
    - By His cross, our sins that would have landed us in hell have been fully paid.
    - Jesus paid them for us.
      - Thanks be to God!
  - It is only through His suffering that we can even be God’s people in the first place.
    - Until you trust in Him, you are not yet justified.
    - But ah, what a tremendous comfort it is for us to know that from the eternal perspective, Jesus has paid the penalty of hell for us.
      - We have, in Him, paid double for all our sins.

TRANS> But I told you that there were two parts to this comfort.

- What else could there possibly be?

B. The second part is that God Himself will come to them.

1. You will remember that this was prophesied by Isaiah in the first part of his book where he showed repeatedly that the promised Son of David would be God.
  - There was Isaiah 7:14, where it says that He would be born of a virgin and called Immanuel which means God with us.
  - There was Isaiah 9:6-7 where it says that the Son born to them would be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace—and that He would reign forever on the throne of David...
2. Well despite the fact that the throne of David was going to fail, here in Isaiah 40, the LORD assures His people that the Son of David, God’s Son, will still come!
  - He gives them this prophecy that after they have finished being punished via the exile,
    - there will be a voice crying in the wilderness (see verse 3) and saying, **“Prepare the way of the LORD!”**
    - Verse 10 explains, **“Behold, the Lord GOD will come!”** The Lord Yahweh—the self-existing God—will be the one who comes to you to establish His righteous kingdom!
      - Verse 11 tells how He will feed His flock like a shepherd and gather the lambs with His arm and gently lead those that are with young.
3. What a revelation this is.
  - The exile will end.
    - And God will send the Son He has promised, and the Son will be both the Son of David and the Son of God.
    - This is unfathomable!
      - The exile would not be the end at all.

- God's promise still stands.
  - His salvation will still come.
- 4. Isaiah goes on in the rest of chapter 40 to speak of the greatness of the LORD—how He is not like the gods of the nations...idols...
  - how He does not faint or grow weary as we do, but ever finishes what He sets out to do and gives us strength to live.
  - The exile is not the end at all—it is rather a part of the LORD's great plan and purpose to establish His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.
    - The words that close the chapter have much to say to us as frail creatures who are perishing under the curse:
      - Isa 40:30-31: **Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, <sup>31</sup> 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.**
        - Trusting in the LORD our Saviour, the LORD who came as a Son born to us to save us, is the only way to have life.

TRANS> The rest of Isaiah (chapter 41-66) fleshes out what the LORD will do to save us, a people who are utterly incapable of saving ourselves.

- Three things we will look at:
  - He Himself will save us from our bondage and guilt.
  - He Himself will invite us to come to Him to be saved.
  - He Himself will gather us in to be saved.
- Let's look at each of these, shall we?

## II. **First, that He Himself will save us from our bondage and our guilt.**

- Understand that when I saw "we" I am talking about *we* who are God's people.
  - God only has one church. He calls those who are baptised in Christ today "Abrahams seed," "the Israel of God," and "heirs of the promises made to Abraham."
  - In the Old Testament, we were a nation God preserved that was waiting for Christ to come and save them and the nations; and now we are people from many nations that are resting in Christ who has come to save.
- So again, here we have Isaiah telling us at that time that the LORD would save us from our bondage and our guilt.
- A. Bondage! In chapters 41-47, the LORD stresses that He has authority to save us from our bondage to the nations.
  1. Yes, Babylon came, Babylon conquered Jerusalem and Babylon took the sons of David off the throne... and led us away to bondage in a foreign land.
    - But it was not as though Babylon suddenly got control over us.
    - This was all a part of the plan of God.
    - He brought us into bondage because of our sin—as a punishment—to humble us for serving idols and refusing to walk with Him as our God.
  2. But now in these chapters, the LORD is making it clear that He has authority over all the nations.

- To show us that this is so, He told us beforehand what He would do to rescue us from bondage to Babylon.
  - In chapters 41-47, He speaks of how none of the idols of the nations (the ones we kept wanting to worship) have authority like He does.
3. There are many passages about God rescuing us from bondage that we could quote here, but we will only look at a couple of examples:
- In Isaiah 41:8-10, He speaks these words of comfort to them even though they will be driven into exile: **“But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend. 9 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: 10 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.’”**
    - Remember, Isaiah spoke these words to comfort the elect in the time when it was only prophesied that we would be in bondage in Babylon.
      - He was assuring those who believed that He would be with them and had plans to deliver them the whole time!
  - Now turn to chapter 44, and you can see where the LORD says that He is the One who raised up King Cyrus the Persian to rule in place of Babylon,
    - and to be the one who would send God’s people back to Jerusalem to rebuild both the city and the temple.
    - In Isaiah 44:28, the LORD speaks of Himself as the One who **“says of Cyrus, he is My shepherd and he shall perform all My pleasure [do what I want], saying to Jerusalem, “you shall be rebuilt,” and to the temple, “your foundation shall be laid.”**
      - In 45:4-6, God explains that He calls Cyrus by name that they might know that He is the LORD: **“For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. 5 I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, 6 that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.”**

TRANS> Only the true and living God can declare beforehand that a kingdom will arise with king named Cyrus who will conquer Babylon, and that when he does, he will send Israel back to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

- What confidence this ought to give us that our God reigns over the nations.
  - And that He is the one who sets us free from bondage so that we can serve Him.
  - Eventually, He will set us completely free from Satan and all of his minions in this world.

B. But it is not only bondage, but also guilt that the LORD will deliver us from.

1. I am not talking about mere guilt feelings—the bad feeling you have from guilt.
  - That is what must people think is bad about guilt—that it makes you feel bad.
  - But the LORD is talking about real guilt that makes you worthy of punishment.
    - To put it plainly, we will all go to hell forever because we are guilty of sinning against God unless we are delivered from guilt—forgiven of our sin by God.

2. The LORD restores us from this guilt by joining His Son to us.
  - Isaiah often speaks of the Son being born to us—I already reminded you about how Isaiah told us that He is God who comes to be born as one of us.
  - a. And when He is a son born to us as our anointed King, we are tied together with Him, so much so, that we stand or fall with Him.
    - He is our King and our Priest who represents all of us before God.
    - In this part of Isaiah, Isaiah calls Israel as a nation “God’s servant,” but he also calls Jesus, the Son of God, “servant” because Jesus represents all of us, again, as our King and our Priest before God.
  - b. And in Isaiah 48-53, we see Jesus the servant of the LORD agonising about our guilt that is now His guilt—not because He ever sinned, but because He represents us all and stands or falls with us all.
    - 1) In Isaiah 48:8, God speaks of how wicked we had been as His people.
      - He says: **Surely you did not hear, surely you did not know; surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb.**
        - But then in verse 9, He promises that He will defer His anger.
    - 2) In chapter 49, we are told that Jesus is the servant who will bring us (Jacob, His people) back to Him!
      - You can see that in 49:5 where the Lord Jesus speaks to God the Father as the one: **Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel is gathered to Him...**
    - 3) And in chapter 50-52, assurance is given that He will succeed in restoring us to God—now that He has come to represent us.
      - But in Isaiah 53, it all comes to a marvellous climax!
  - c. In Isaiah 53, Isaiah tells us what the Son of God when He represents us before the Father as guilty sinners!
    - Look at Isa 53:4-6. It could not be any clearer than this!
      - **Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.** [in other words, our thought, at first, was that He was being punished for His own sins...but this was not so... verse 5:] **But He was wounded for our transgressions [sins], He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.** [In other words, He was punished because of our guilt. We sinned and He was punished for it so that we could be restored to God. Verse 6 explains it plainly:] **6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**
        - The word *laid* is a word that means to strike violently—
        - Our sins came down violently on Him.
    - Keep in mind that these marvellous words about Jesus’ suffering on the cross were written seven centuries before Jesus was born.
      - Even those who reject the proper dating of Isaiah are forced to admit that these words were written at least a few hundred years before Jesus came.
      - These words obviously show that the LORD planned all along that His Son would die for our sins.

- As it says in verse 10, **His soul was made an offering for our sin**, and as verse 11 says, **the LORD saw the labour of His soul**—when He was punished for our sin—**and was satisfied...** as a judge...
  - *Satisfied* as a Judge that justice had been done—that He had been punished sufficiently for the sins of us all.

TRANS> If you understand anything about our guilt—the guilt of the whole church before God, this is wonderful news!

- God so loved us that He gave His Son to die for our sins—and His Son has now done this—and as we saw in verse 5, by His stripes we are healed.
  - There is no greater comfort—no greater relief—than to know that your sins are forgiven—that through faith in Jesus, you have full forgiveness.

### III. In Isaiah, God’s warm invitation to trust in Jesus goes out to all.

- That is what we see in chapters 54-58!

A. In 54, God tells His people that now they who were barren are fruitful!

1. They were loaded with guilt before Jesus came, making it impossible for them to bear fruit as His people—all they could bring forth was more sin and guilt.
  - See how their fruitfulness is described in Isa 54:4-6: **“Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. <sup>5</sup> For your Maker is your husband, [That changes everything!] the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused,” says your God.**”
2. In verse 11, He addresses us as the afflicted one who is tossed with tempest and not comforted, but in verse 14, He says that we will be established in righteousness. and far from oppression and terror.
  - Jesus does that through the cross.

B. In Isaiah 55 & 56, both Jew and Gentile are invited to come to the LORD for eternal life and blessing.

1. All of chapter 55 is a warm invitation to come and be forgiven on the basis of God’s crucified Son.
  - Look at 55:6-7, right in the middle of the passage: **“<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. <sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.**”
  - Isn’t that delightful?
    - If you come to Him, you will not only be pardoned, but abundantly pardoned... Isaiah is full of such comforting words... tremendous!
2. In chapter 56, the LORD makes sure to extend this invitation to the nations that were outside of Israel.
  - In v. 3, He says, **Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD speak, saying, “The LORD has utterly separated me from His people.”**

- That is not true in Christ... we who are from the nations are welcomed to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at God's table.
- Those who come to Christ are all welcomed.

C. Chapter 57-58 makes it clear that humble repentance is all that is required.

1. Not repentance as some work of satisfaction that you have to do... not that...
  - but repentance in the sense of turning to this welcoming God that I have been telling you about who sent His Son to die for His people's sins...
  - Simply humble yourself and come to Him for your salvation.
  - Leave your idols and come to the true God for mercy and life—and He will have mercy on you and give you life.
    - You don't have to do anything but cast yourself on the Son... just give up and come to Him and put yourself in His hands.
2. Look at what the LORD says, for example, in Isaiah 57:15: **For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."**
  - Wow! Who could resist such a warm invitation to come receive life from Him!
3. In chapter 58, the LORD declares how unacceptable false religion is to Him—
  - He has no use for the people who fast and expect God to be impressed with them and answer their prayers!
  - God was not answering their prayers because their fasting was not the right sort of fasting... they were fasting to gain His favour, but they were not fasting that they might be delivered from the sin!
    - They are trying to save themselves by fasting instead of looking to Jesus to save them.
    - Don't do that—you can never justify yourself before God—let Jesus do the justifying.

TRANS> But do you know, even with these warm invitations, we will not come to the Father unless He draws us by divine power.

- There are millions who hear the outward call of the gospel and never come.
  - They are told of Jesus, of His death on the cross, and still they do not come.
  - But Isaiah tells us what the LORD does, even about that!

#### **IV. The LORD Himself gathers us in—He draws us to Christ by His Spirit.**

- This is what I want you to see in Isaiah 59-66.

A. In chapter 59-61 we are told how He effectually calls us...

- *Effectual calling* is the term we use to refer to Him calling us so that we come... a simple invitation is not enough for us.
1. Chapter 59 opens by explaining that the problem is not that God is unable to save us—but that our sin keeps us away from Him.
    - In other words, we don't want to come to God and be His people—we want to go on in our sin and rebellion even though forgiveness is offered!



- But in 59:20, Isaiah says: “**20 The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,**” says the LORD.
    - But how is it that they will turn? What will God do to get them to turn?
      - Look at verse 21 where the LORD tells us that He will give us the Holy Spirit so that we will turn: “**As for Me,**” says the LORD, “**this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,**” says the LORD, “**from this time and forevermore.**”
      - Do you know about the Holy Spirit?
        - He is the one who changes our hearts so that we will receive the truth about our need for Christ and will come to Him for salvation.
        - Unless the Holy Spirit works in us, we will never come to Christ, even when He is sweetly offered to us for forgiveness and life.
2. Isaiah 60 describes how God causes the light of the gospel of Christ to shine upon both Jews and Gentiles.
- The first three verses explain how He will first shine the light upon His people who were in deep darkness and then upon the Gentiles.
  - When He does this, you can no longer be blind to the glory of the gospel.
    - God shines the light into you and you see clearly so that you turn to Him.
    - The chapter goes on to speak about Gentiles flooding into the kingdom of Christ.
  - We saw this back in chapter 2 last week—how Isaiah said that when Jesus came, the Gentiles would steam up to Jerusalem to seek the LORD as their God.
3. In chapter 61, we are shown that it is Jesus Himself who preaches the gospel that the Spirit uses to bring us to God.
- In 61:1-3, He says: **The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, 3 to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.**
  - It is the voice of Christ that sinners hear when the gospel is preached and the Spirit works—they know that the LORD Himself is calling them to come for the salvation that He has purchased for us on the cross.
- B. When we His people hear His voice, we respond, seeking Him earnestly—both for our own salvation and for the salvation of others—especially in the church!
1. The heart of chapter 62 is captured in verses 6 and 7 where we (as watchmen) are found pleading with the LORD for salvation:
- **6 I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, 7 and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.**

- God has set us praying—it is His doing—and we will not stop praying for God’s kingdom to come until it does—until Jerusalem—the city of God—is a praise in all the earth.
2. The LORD Jesus, in answer to these prayers, is seen in Isaiah 63 coming as a glorious warrior who easily destroys His enemies that His people may serve Him...
- And even though they have rebelled in the past, He finds them broken and humbled...
    - In 63:19, they confess, saying: **“We have become *like* those of old, over whom You never ruled, those who were never called by Your name.”**
  - But with that confession, they turn earnestly to Him... Isaiah 64:1: **Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—**
    - Now they want Him to come.
    - They want Him to come and to work in their lives—64:8: **“But now, O LORD, You *are* our Father; we *are* the clay, and You our potter; and all we *are* the work of Your hand.”**
      - You see again, the saving is His work...
      - We are saved when we come to Him to save us, not when we try to save ourselves...
        - And we come to Him, as we saw, when He calls us in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- C. The outcome is that we are established in Christ—His kingdom is established.
1. Chapter 65 and 66 speak of this outcome when the kingdom fully comes!
- In Isaiah 65:17-19, the LORD says: **For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. <sup>18</sup> But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem *as* a rejoicing, and her people a joy. <sup>19</sup> I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying.**
2. Both chapters show that when the kingdom comes, the people who did not come to Christ will be made to suffer,
- Part of the kingdom coming includes the casting away of those who never came to Christ for salvation.
    - And so in 65:13-14, there is this huge contrast described: **Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, My servants shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed; <sup>14</sup> behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and wail for grief of spirit.”**
  - And the book ends, in fact, with a dire warning for those who refuse to come.
    - Isaiah was, like his LORD, deeply burdened for them.
    - And so the final paragraph of Isaiah in 66:22-24: **“For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD, “So shall your descendants and your name remain. <sup>23</sup> And it shall**

come to pass *that* from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD. <sup>24</sup> “And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

- That is what we are without Christ...an abhorrence to all flesh...
- But why go on without Christ?
  - The warm invitation is before you and so is the warning if you refuse.
  - All you have to do is come to Christ.

**Conclusion:** What a gracious comforting God the LORD God of heaven is!

- He sends this unbelievable redemption through His Son,
  - Then He pleads with us to come and receive the blessing...
  - And then He draws us by His Spirit so that we will come.