

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 43

Overview of chapters 40-66

There are two major sections in the book of Isaiah: chapters 1-39, and chapters 40-66.

There are relatively few historical references to time periods or events in chapters 40-66. Similarly, there are few direct statements that identify a specific speaker or audience for the oracles.

The big story is: God knows and plans the future. These amazing prophecies in chapters 40-66 demonstrate this. These prophecies are supernatural revelation from God about His plans for the future.

One day the Lord will come in glory and power to redeem His people, transform nature, establish justice, and bring people from many nations into His kingdom – which will never end.

Stepping across the threshold from chapter 39 to chapter 40, you find yourself in an utterly different place. Things have completely changed.

Let's read 39:5 through 40:11.

Let's look at some of the changes:

End of chapter 39	Beginning of chapter 40
Doom	Comfort & good news
Judgment	Grace & salvation
One voice pronouncing doom	A chorus of comforters (the 3 imperatives in verses 1-2 are all plural) Three voices in verses 3,6, & 9
One faithless nation	Embraces the whole world

This is characteristic of the two parts of Isaiah as a whole: chapters 1-39 versus chapters 40-66. To get a sense of this, we will now hear how each part begins, ie chapter 1 verses chapter 40. Let's **read Isaiah 1:1-15**, and compare that to **Isaiah 40:1-11**

They are dramatically different!

Chapter 40

Outline of chapter 40

Verses 1-11	The message of comfort
Verses 12-26	The majesty of the one and only God, the creator of all things
Verses 27-31	The Lord gives strength to the weary people who wait expectantly for Him

Let's set the stage by considering the audience. The audience is not the Jews in exile in Babylon as many teach. We can discover a lot about Isaiah's audience for chapter 40 by reading between the lines.

The audience:

- God's chosen people,
- who have doubts, fears, and a sense of abandonment
- who are sinful and war-weary
- who have enemies: powerful nations and rulers and their "gods"
- Who are on the verge of losing hope

Sound like anybody you know these days?

Let's read all of chapter 40 together.

I hope you could see that Isaiah includes a lot of **questions** in chapter 40. They are mostly rhetorical. That means that both Isaiah and his audience would have known the answers. They are posed for a desired **effect** – to get the audience to ponder the facts and bring them to bear on their own situation.

See verses **12, 13, 14, 18, 21, 25, 27, & 28,**

The Bible and Christianity are unique in that they declare that the most fundamental and important question about human existence is not why or when or how - it's WHO!

See **Genesis 1:1, Exodus 3:13-16, Acts 8:34, Acts 9:5, and Romans 7:25.**

See above for the verses **in bold**. They ask the question “**Who**”.

Expanding verses 12-26: “**to whom will you liken God?**”

Nature? No! (verses 12-14)
The nations? No! (verses 15-17)
Idols? You’re kidding me, right? (verses 18-20)

The refrain in verses 21-26:
Nature (verses 21-22)
Rulers (verses 23-24)
Angels (verse 26)

Verse 18 and verse 25 ask the same rhetorical question.

Verse 18 uses the third person “God”.

Verse 25 uses the first person “Me”.

Isaiah 40 in the New Testament

Isaiah 40	New Testament
Verses 3-5	Matthew 3:3 Mark 1:2,3 Luke 3:4-6 John 1:23

Verses 6-8	1 Peter 1:24, 25 James 1:10,11
Verse 9	Romans 10:15
Verse 10	Revelation 22:12
Verse 13	Romans 11:34 1 Corinthians 2:16

Notes on individual passages

Verses 1-11 are eschatological. This means that Isaiah is prophesying about events in the far future – namely the message of salvation: the redemption of the nation and people and city of Jerusalem, the coming of the Messiah and the promised blessings of the Kingdom.

Verses 3-5:

The highway is for the LORD to travel on when He reveals His glory in a way that all mankind will see it. The New Testament identifies the “voice” in verse 3 as John the Baptist. (see table above).

Verse 6: “all flesh” and “the people” both refer to the gentile nations.

Verse 10: the Lord’s reward -He will share the blessings of His work of salvation with His people.

Verse 12:

Consider the enormous size of the ocean. The billions of gallons of water.
Consider the vastness of the heavens. The trillions of miles

Consider the height and grandeur of the mountains. The tons of rocks and soil in each mountain, and the great mountain ranges of the earth like the Rockies, the Andes, and the Himalayas

Verses 13-14: Since we cannot grasp the measurements of the world, how we can we possibly take the measure of God who created the world!!

Verse 15: contrast with verse 12. A drop from a bucket compared to the oceans. A speck of dust compared to the mountains and the stars.

Verse 18: There is nothing or no one in this universe that compares to the Lord God. Yet people act as if He does have rivals – the seemingly supernatural, powerful, and wise. Consider this current-day list:

Satan

Science

The “deep state”

The new world order

Cyberwarfare

Big tech/Social media giants

Verses 25-26: If God can keep track of billions of stars, He will certainly keep track of each one of His chosen people!

Verse 29: see 2 Corinthians 12:8-10