Session 13 The Forerunner Message in Isaiah 40

1. Introduction
   1. The context of this message is probably the Assyrian invasion of Judah around 701 BC. The Assyrian empire was the superpower of that day. Some see this as referring to the Babylon crisis. However, the promises in 40:1-2, 5 did not occur following the Babylon captivity. Isaiah gave Judah direction on how to respond to God in context to an international and national crisis.

*The historical context in which Isaiah is writing is the trauma of the crisis, because this is about responding to God in a place of international and national crisis. That is the backdrop of Isaiah 40. There is an international, national crisis going on. Of course, it is the same as every chapter–it is the Assyrian empire. The Assyrian empire was the superpower of that day. For those who are with us for the first time, nobody uses that name—the Assyrian empire—today, but it is basically the Middle East: Syria, Iraq, Iran, some of those nations altogether. There were different combinations of them over the 300 years of the Assyrian empire connected to Isaiah’s day.*

*Then we have an outline here. You can look at that at your own.*

* 1. Outline for Isaiah 40

40:1-2 The call to comfort Jerusalem  
40:3-5 The call to prepare the way of the Lord  
40:6-8 God’s plans, purposes, and promises will last forever   
40:9-11 The mighty Warrior is a tender Shepherd  
40:12-20 The Lord has all power and wisdom   
40:21-26 The Lord has power over all the nations   
40:27-31 Practical application: receiving strength

* 1. Isaiah 40 has specific application to the time when Judah faced the Assyrian invasion (Isa. 36-37), when John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord, when the body of Christ has faced persecution throughout history, and when the Antichrist assaults Israel and the nations (Rev. 12-13).

*Isaiah 40 has specific applications. I am going to give four specific applications, and they are all related to a national crisis or a big event in salvation history or both together.*

*The first application was in Isaiah’s day when Judah was fearful, trembling in fear as the cruel superpower of Assyria was surrounding the country of Judah. Judah was a small country with Jerusalem in part of it. The Assyrians are threatening to destroy them. Isaiah was speaking about interacting with God and looking to God in this national crisis because fear was dominating the culture.*

*Then the second application was a spiritual, dynamic, glorious event in salvation history, the coming of the Messiah, the first coming. John the Baptist was the Isaiah 40 messenger. The Roman empire was obviously crowding around the nation of Israel as well oppressing them, later to destroy them in AD 70. This was a great event in salvation history, the first coming of the Lord.*

*Third, this chapter has been relevant throughout history, particularly when the Body of Christ or the Jewish nation has been under intense persecution. There are those seasons of persecution that are more intense than others. This chapter has been a lifesaver, giving strength and insight.*

*Fourth, though of course I believe the primary application of this chapter through these first three are completely important and valid, but there yet another crisis, there is yet another event in salvation history in which this chapter is going to have relevance in its fullest sense of the word. That is when the Antichrist empire is oppressing the nations of the earth and bearing down on Israel, seeking to completely exterminate and destroy Israel. The Body of Christ will be under severe persecution from the Antichrist empire. Messengers will go forth in the spirit of John the Baptist, proclaiming what is going on, why there is good news in the midst of the crisis, how we are supposed to respond to God, and what the big-picture story really, really is.*

*So Isaiah 40 is a chapter for all of redemptive history from when Isaiah wrote it onward. It is a chapter particularly for the messengers in the generation the Lord returns. It is the diet that they will feed on. It is the diet they will feed the people of God on. This is the chapter that will make sense of things in a unique way. This is one of those unique chapters, Isaiah 40.*

* 1. Isaiah issued a twofold call to the Lord’s messengers to comfort to Jerusalem (40:1-2) and to prepare the way of the Lord or to “build a spiritual highway for the Lord” by preparing people spiritually for the coming of the Lord (40:3-5). This twofold “messenger calling” is for any who will answer it.
     1. The Holy Spirit is stirring people in this hour to answer the call to comfort Jerusalem and to prepare the way of the Lord by “building a spiritual highway” for the Lord.
     2. The primary application of this calling is for messengers in the generation the Lord returns. In that time, the Antichrist will be oppressing the nations and seeking to destroy Israel.
  2. The Lord’s messengers are exhorted to “cry out” four times in this chapter (40:2, 3, 6, 9). Ezekiel pointed out the responsibility to speak boldly after being commissioned to do so (Ezek. 33:1-10).

7“…I have made you [Ezekiel] a watchman [messenger]…you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and   
you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way,   
and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. (Ezek. 33:6-9)

1. messenger call #1—to comfort Jerusalem (Isa. 40:1-2)
   1. The Lord’s messengers are mandated to speak a message of God’s comfort to Jerusalem (40:1-2).

1“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” Says your God. 2“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.” (Isa. 40:1-2)

*The chapter starts off very, very positively. It starts off with a call to comfort Jerusalem. The Lord’s messengers are mandated, though it does not tell us who the Lord’s messengers are. It is from God, calling people to take on this messenger role. The call is to whosoever will do it. It is a blanket call to be a messenger.*

*There is a twofold mandate in Isaiah 40 for the messengers. The first one is to comfort Israel, to comfort Jerusalem. The second one, which we will look at in a few moments, is to build a spiritual highway for God and for the people of God to interact with Him. So it is a twofold mandate for messengers. It is a “whosoever” will answer the calls.*

*We are in an hour of history where the Spirit is visiting people in a really specific way, stirring them to answer the call, this twofold mandate to comfort Jerusalem and to build a spiritual highway. We will look at this a little bit more in detail. It starts in Isaiah 40:1, “Comfort, yes, comfort.” You feel the intensity and the urgency by the double imperative here. “‘Comfort, yes, comfort My people,’ says your God.”*

* 1. ***Speak comfort***: The Lord commanded His messengers to comfort or strengthen Jerusalem (40:1).
     1. There are two groups being addressed in Isaiah 40:1. The Lord commands the global body of Christ who love and listen to God (yet who are distinct from Jerusalem) to give a message of comfort to a group referred to as “My people Jerusalem” (who live in Jerusalem). The first group includes Gentiles believers speaking an end-time message of comfort to Jerusalem.

*That is an interesting phrase. If you look at that carefully, in verse 1 there are two groups of people. There are people of Jerusalem called “My people, says the Lord.” There is another group who love God; they are the messengers. They live outside of Jerusalem. They are distinct from Jerusalem because they are called to bring the message to Jerusalem, so it is not those living in Jerusalem. Thus there are two groups here.*

*The second are not only but predominately Gentile believers across the earth, all across the nations, who are to take this calling as they answer the Spirit’s call to be a messenger.*

* + 1. We see intensity and urgency in Isaiah’s double imperative—“comfort, yes, comfort.”
    2. Isaiah comforted Israel with the truths found in 40:2, 5, 10-11, 27-31. The full comfort of salvation is anchored in seeing the millennial and eternal aspects of the biblical narrative. This is the primary place of comfort to Israel, the Church, and the nations.
    3. Paul comforted people with the truth of Jesus’ return and the resurrection (1 Thes. 4:16-18).

16For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven…and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17Then we who are alive…shall be caught up with them…to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thes. 4:16-18)

* + 1. Isaiah 40 is an exhortation to comfort and prepare people for the Lord by telling the whole story. It reveals the end of the story, our ministry focus, and God’s character and power.
  1. God called Gentile believers in the ends of the world and in the chief of nations to comfort Israel. The “messenger mandate” to comfort Jerusalem is given to believers in the ends of the earth. Will you answer this call to proclaim God’s message to Jerusalem (the daughter of Zion)?

11Indeed the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the world: “Say to the daughter of Zion,   
‘Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him…’” (Isa. 62:11)

*There is a very specific calling upon Gentile believers to comfort Jerusalem in the generation the Lord returns. Now many Gentile believers love Jesus. Most believers, 99.99 percent of them or whatever in the Body of Christ, are Gentiles. Most of them, however, are not connected to the biblical mandate to comfort Jerusalem.*

*Myself, when I first met Bob Jones, he told me, “You are going to be involved in a ministry that is going to pray for Israel.” He asked, “Do you ever pray for Israel?”*

*I said, “Never. Why?”*

*He looked at me and said, thirty-five years ago, “This is going to be a lot of work.” He went on, “You don’t know anything what I am talking about?” I had never thought of Israel.*

*Most of the people who come here come because they love the intercession, contending for revival, the intimacy-with-God message. I have heard the story over and over. They say, “I did not get the Israel thing when I first got here.” I have news for the whole Body of Christ right from the Bible: God is calling Gentile believers, anyone who will answer the call that they are to be messengers to comfort Jerusalem. It is a biblical, necessary mandate. We will get into why it is so critical that we do this.*

*Look here in Isaiah 62:11, “The Lord has proclaimed to the ends of the earth.” That is to the Gentiles out there, by the way. He says, “I am not talking to Jerusalem right now. I am talking to all the believers in the earth: tell Jerusalem this message.”*

*So the question you should be asking in your relationship with the Lord is “Are you answering the call? Are you moving forward in that calling to say this message to Jerusalem” or to Zion. Zion and Jerusalem can usually be used interchangeably. Tell the Jewish people in Israel, or the Jewish people in the nations, tell them their salvation is coming. The Messiah is coming back, and He is going to come with His rewards and His blessings. He is coming in days to come. We are to tell them that, then to break down a lot of the details that are implied with that.*

* + 1. The global body of Christ is to comfort and strengthen Jerusalem. They are to sing, boldly shout, and declare God’s message of the salvation of Israel (Jer. 31:7-10). This message will be challenging to speak in context to the anti-Semitism in the end times. Many Gentile believers love Jesus, but are not yet connected to the biblical mandate to comfort Jerusalem.

7Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, “O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!”…10Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.” (Jer. 31:7-10)

*Here in Jeremiah 31 it calls out the Gentiles again. “Sing with gladness for Jacob”—that means Israel—“shout among the chief of the nations.” So in the chief of the nations, here is what you are to do: you are to say, “O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel.” So the believers, among the chief of the nations, are to enter into this partnership with God, crying out to God to save the remnant of Israel.*

*They do not just pray for Israel; that is verse 7. Verse 10, O nations, make the message clear. Do not just pray for Israel. Proclaim the message. Become a messenger. Tell them in even the far away, distant places, not just in the major cities. Go to the most remote island. The message must go global.*

*The Holy Spirit is calling Gentile believers to answer the messenger calling. It is a messenger calling. Again, it is twofold here in Isaiah 40. Number one to comfort Jerusalem, and number two to build a spiritual highway which we will look at in just a moment. So as a body of believers, we want to answer that call because when we look this Jeremiah passage, and we say, “Okay, that looks good,” it’s the context of Jeremiah 31—which we will get to in our next semester in the spring—it is this global antisemitism against Israel. So when you are reading it, you may say, “Well, sure! I will say, ‘Save Israel.” I will say, ‘He that scattered Israel will gather, Jeremiah 31:10.’ I will say that.” Well, the environment is going to become far more hostile in terms of antisemitism, and it will be far more costly to say this message. Right now a few people in the nations will get bothered, but you give it some more years and this is going to be a very, very costly message to be true to. So, it is the sort of thing you want to set your heart now for it. You want to search it out in the Scriptures now.*

*I do not want to get in the hour of intense pressure and then start figuring out if it is even in the Bible that I am supposed to take a stand. Because, if you are under intense pressure, you will find Bible verses to get you off the hook. When you are in a time before the pressure intensifies, and you see it clearly, you are quite a bit more objective because you are loving God and you are reading it. You are saying, “Yeah.” You get your heart rooted, then when the pressure intensifies you cannot cast it off. A lot of folks wait until pressured, but then under the pressure they cannot quite see the verses clearly, though they are supposed to take a stand. So as a community of believers, we are wanting to be intentional about understanding these things now before things really heat up.*

* + 1. God is calling anyone who will answer the call to be a messenger to comfort Israel.
    2. ***Her warfare is ended***: Comfort Jerusalem, assuring her that her military conflict will end.   
       This will only be fulfilled when Jesus returns and puts an end to warfare in the earth (2:4). Jerusalem’s warfare did not end after the Jewish exiles returned from the Babylonian captivity in 538 BC. Her warfare has continued—Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 and there have been attacks against Israel throughout history and even more will come by the Antichrist.

4He [Jesus] shall judge between the nations…they shall beat their swords into plowshares, …nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.   
(Isa. 2:4)

*Now the message we are to speak is in verse 2. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem. Speak comfort to Jerusalem, cry out to her.” Tell her this, the military warfare against her, the hostility of nations that has continually come against her, is ended. For nearly 4,000 years since Abraham, there has been hostility against Israel. Tell her it is over because Jesus has come and the millennial kingdom has started. That is the reason it is over. There is a day when there is no more military conflict, no more political intrigue with nations.*

* + 1. ***Her iniquity is pardoned***: Comfort Jerusalem by crying out to her that her sin is forgiven.   
       The Lord can only give a full pardon to Jerusalem and others because Jesus took the penalty for our sin by shedding His own blood and in bearing the wrath of God on the cross (Isa. 53).

*Tell her, number two, her sin is totally forgiven. For all of her apostasy and rebellion, God has completely forgiven her sin.*

* + 1. ***Double portion***: Jerusalem will receive a double portion of grace and honor in the Millennium (61:7). Jesus will sit on His throne, and the New Jerusalem will descend there.

7Instead of your shame you shall have double honor …they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. (Isa. 61:7)

*Tell her, number three, she is going to have double honor and double glory and double grace. Even in the context of all of her sin, God is going to give her double glory and double grace. Now some folks think that she is going to get double penalty. Isaiah goes on later to develop the idea of the double portion. He says in Isaiah 61 that he is talking to Jerusalem, “Instead of your shame you will have double honor.” This is when the Lord comes, in the Millennium. When the Lord comes and looks at Jerusalem, He will say, “I am going to give you double grace, double forgiveness, double honor, double favor in the nations. I am going to put that upon you now that your King is in place in Jerusalem. You are going to possess double of everything nearly.” That is what it says here in Isaiah 61:7.*

* + - 1. The glory of God will be openly manifested in Jerusalem (60:1-3).

1Arise, shine; for…the glory of the Lord is risen upon you [Jerusalem]. 2For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth…His glory will be seen upon you. 3The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isa. 60:1-3)

* + - 1. Jerusalem will be praised by all nations as the joy of the earth (Isa. 62:7). Jerusalem will be the city that most people in the nations will visit with great joy.

7And give Him no rest till He establishes…Jerusalem a praise in the earth. (Isa. 62:7)

*You know, it goes on in Isaiah 62 and says that the intercessors are going to cry out until Jerusalem is a praise in the earth. Well, right now Jerusalem is being mocked in the earth. It is going to become more hostile the closer we get to the Lord’s return. The closer we get to the Lord’s return, the less Jerusalem will be praised in the earth. The more they will be hated in the earth.*

*There will be a sudden reversal when the Lord Jesus comes and sets up His throne in Jerusalem. All the nations will want to go to Jerusalem, the number one city of the earth, because the glory of God will be there, and the throne of Jesus, and the New Jerusalem coming down, and the city of the great King from Psalm 48–all there in Jerusalem. The whole earth will be saying that Jerusalem is the praise, the place to go. It will be the number one visitor place forever in history. It will be Jerusalem. It will be praised worldwide, and that is part of the double honor that is coming to Jerusalem.*

* + - 1. Mount Zion or Jerusalem will be the joy of the earth (Ps. 48:1-2).

2…the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion…the city of the great King. (Ps. 48:2)

1. messenger call #2—The call to prepare the way of the Lord (isa. 40:3-5)
   1. The Lord’s messengers will comfort Jerusalem (40:1).

3The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; 5the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together…” (Isa. 40:3-5)

*Let’s look at preparing the way of the Lord. I want you to catch this again; this is the second mandate, because the first mandate is to comfort Jerusalem as a messenger. The second mandate is to prepare for the Lord’s coming to the earth. So that is the twofold mandate. The call to messengers was to whomever would answer it. There was nobody in particular. I guess in Isaiah’s day it would have been Isaiah and his disciples who are identified a bit in Isaiah 8. He had a team of people that he was discipling in the things of God. They were reading the Word and studying it. Undoubtedly, they were answering the call to be messengers to prepare for what was coming.*

* 1. A mysterious call went forth to prepare a highway in the desert for the Lord to come to Jerusalem (40:3-4). In the ancient world, a city would build a special road to welcome a visiting king. The desert was a place where there were many rough places and obstacles in building such a highway.

*We know that there is a global dimension to this. Nobody in Isaiah’s day, nobody knew there was a John the Baptist coming 700 years later. It was just left wide open. There is a voice. Nobody knows who that voice is. He is crying in the wilderness. Nobody knows when. It would be 700 years after Isaiah. He is saying, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for God.”*

*That is a mysterious command. Make a highway in the desert? Nobody makes a highway in the desert, by the way, because it is far more costly and takes far more work. There are many more obstacles in the desert than there are in a city to building a highway.*

*The idea here is that when a king or a royal family, a monarch, a dignitary would visit a city, the city would make preparations. It is like when the Olympics is going to be in a city, and for four or five or eight years they are building up the city for the grand event of the Olympics. Well, when the word came that the emperor was visiting your city, which would happen maybe once in 100 years, they would get the notice and take the next year or two or however much time they had to build up a highway so that they could have a procession for the emperor to come in. They had to move all the obstacles out of the way. That is kind of the backdrop, the context.*

*Here it is really strange and mysterious. They are building a highway for God. Well, God does not march on a highway. There are no obstacles we need to move out of the way for God to walk on a highway. I mean He created the heavens and the earth. This is a bit cryptic and mysterious. Of course, when you get all the passages together, it is a spiritual highway of truth. That is what John the Baptist said, as we find in John 1, “I am that voice at the first coming. I am building a highway, but it is a highway of truth. It is a spiritual highway.”*

*Now do not be confused because there are about ten other passages in Isaiah—maybe eight or nine, not quite ten—where there is going to be a physical highway built related to the second coming of Christ. That is another subject for another time. We have mentioned that a little bit over the weeks. There is a physical highway being built from Egypt to Assyria. This massive highway going into Jerusalem is physical, and it is for all the refugees and everybody making pilgrimages to Jerusalem to go on that highway.*

*Here it is a spiritual highway. Isaiah is the only one who actually develops this highway theology. When you read it, at first you wonder, “Is this the spiritual highway of truth or is this a physical highway with construction and technology? Which one is it?” Well, clearly this one here is a spiritual highway. The premise is that it is a highway for God. What it means: God does not need a highway, but one of the fundamental principles of the kingdom is that God says, as it were, “I will release My glory through My people. I will only release it through My people when they are in agreement with Me.” So the highway is a highway of truth. It is a highway that tells God’s values and tells God’s plans. It is a highway that is proclaiming ideas: God’s values and God’s end-time plans. When God’s people understand them, and they agree with them, they come into agreement and the Lord would say, “In that agreement is the highway My power and purposes will be released through.” It is a spiritual highway.*

*That is what John the Baptist was building, a spiritual highway. He was getting the people of Israel to see the truth about who the Messiah was and to repent of compromise and wrong attitudes, so they could be a part of partnering with the Lord. So, it was a spiritual highway that John the Baptist was building.*

*Isaiah goes on here, “Every valley shall be exalted; every mountain will be brought low. Every crooked place made straight, and every rough place made smooth.” Here is the really important point to note, verse 5: the glory of the Lord will be seen by the whole world together. When it says, “all flesh” will see the glory, they are not talking about a figurative “by faith I think I see His glory; I sense that He is important so I saw His glory” in that limited sense. That is actually true, but this is not what Isaiah 40:5 is talking about. There is a day when the Messiah, the Bridegroom King, will come on the sky—we all know it—in flaming fire, in the glory of the Father. “Every single eye will see Him,” it says it three times. Every eye will see Him in the planet. That is what Isaiah 40:5 is talking about.*

*So Isaiah could say to John the Baptist 700 years later, “You can borrow this verse, but it is bigger than you. It is for a timeframe beyond you. It is for a timeframe when every single human being, every eye, will see the glory of God.” Everyone will. He will come back again in flaming fire, the glory of the Father, with all the angels, all the saints caught up to meet Him in the air, and nobody will miss it. It will be the critical moment of human history in salvation history. So Isaiah is anchoring this whole messenger calling into an end-time scenario here in verse 5. “Yes,” he would say to the people of his day, “Yes, we are going to comfort Jerusalem and tell them of the great promises that are coming. Yes, we will cover Jerusalem in our day, but there is a day when this will have a global dimension of fullness. John the Baptist, you can borrow that verse and fulfill it a little bit when you introduce the first coming of the Lord.”*

*That was so significant. Jesus said John was the greatest man ever born of a woman. His unique calling preparing the first coming of the Lord, the importance, and the value, and the sacredness of that calling cannot be over-exaggerated. I want you to see in verse 5, this calling is anchored in an end-of-the-age, eschatological context. It is a messenger calling for a time even beyond John’s.*

* + 1. It was a bit mysterious—why would the Creator need people to remove obstacles in order to build a special highway for Him? There are no obstacles that can stop Him (40:12-26).
    2. The prophecy of the Lord building a “highway” is unique to Isaiah. He made at least seven references to this millennial highway (Isa. 11:16; 19:23; 35:8; 40:3; 49:11; 57:14; 62:10).
  1. ***Highway for God****:* It’s a highway “for God” or one that serves God’s purposes by preparing people either to walk with God spiritually (before Jesus’ second coming) or to come to Him in Jerusalem physically (after Jesus’ second coming). The main idea here is not in building a physical highway for Jesus’ procession into Jerusalem. He comes up to Jerusalem through Bozrah (Isa. 63:1-6).
     1. ***A physical highway***: After Jesus returns, He will cause a physical highway to Jerusalem to   
        be built. This highway will serve different purposes such as facilitating Jewish refugees in returning to Israel, Gentiles making pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3; Zech. 14:16-19), and helping people who travel from Egypt to Assyria to serve the Lord together (Isa. 19:23). The bowl judgments (earthquakes, large hailstones, etc.) will destroy many roads to Israel.
     2. ***A spiritual highway***: Before Jesus’ return, the Holy Spirit will raise up messengers who will prepare people spiritually for His coming by equipping them to “walk with God” (40:3-5).

3Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? (Amos 3:3)

*God called it a highway for God in verse 3. We already covered this, but I just want you to get it again, because God will only manifest His glory in a consistent way through people as they agree with Him. They agree in two ways. They agree with His values. We call that purity or generosity or humility or righteousness. We agree with His values so we repent of compromise and wrong attitudes. We embrace His values, because the Lord would say, “I am not going to use you in a consistent way if you do not agree with My values.” Again humility, generosity, purity, love, righteousness, justice, those normal kingdom values.*

*There is another thing that the people are to agree with: His plans. Not just being humble and generous, but grasping what He is doing in His global, eschatological unfolding of His plans to drive evil off the planet and replace every single evil leader on the planet with a new leader, completely have a new world order. Literally in one day He is going to shift it all. They are to agree with that.*

* + - 1. A basic kingdom principle is that God releases His power through people who walk in agreement with His values and plans—they participate in releasing His glory, instead of drawing back in compromise, fear, or offense.
      2. The forerunner message prepares people to walk in agreement with the Lord’s values and plans so that they can participate with Him in releasing His glory in context to the unique dynamics of the generation the Lord returns.
  1. The call to prepare people spiritually to receive the Lord by making straight a “spiritual highway of truth” for God is applicable at His first and second comings. This includes calling people to repent and agree with God’s values and plan.

“Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (Isa. 40:3)

* + 1. John the Baptist prepared people spiritually for Jesus’ coming (Lk. 3). There are two passages that prophesied his ministry—Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 (Mk. 1:2-3).
    2. John the Baptist made straight a “spiritual highway of truth” by preaching repentance and preparing people for God. He did not prepare a “physical” highway. He focused on changing people, not the topography to build a physical highway
    3. After Jesus returns, a physical highway will be built (Isa. 11:16; 19:23; 35:8; 40:3; 57:14; 62:10). The physical highway is not the main emphasis in 40:3-4.
  1. ***The message of John the Baptist***: John modeled the way to prepare a spiritual highway for the Lord. He emphasized a twofold message—calling people to *repent* (to agree with God’s values)   
     and announcing *Jesus’ coming* (to agree with God’s plans that are associated with Jesus’ coming).

3And he went…preaching a baptism of repentance…4as it is written in…Isaiah…saying:   
“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. 5Every valley shall be filled and every mountain…brought low; the crooked places   
shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; 6and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’” (Lk. 3:3-6)

*John the Baptist modeled the way to prepare a spiritual highway. Again, there will be a physical highway too, so do not lose sight of that. That is not what this chapter is talking about. John had a twofold message. The reason we care about this message because John is a model of the end-time messengers. Though there was one, John the Baptist of course, there will be two witnesses, those two amazing prophets in Jerusalem. I believe there will be thousands and hundreds of thousands of messengers, if not many more, maybe some millions, I do not know, all over the earth who will be in their local area giving expression to this Isaiah 40 calling, this messenger calling. They will answer the call in their life, in their generation, in their local area. They will answer it.*

*We want to look at what John the Baptist did when he answered it. We want to do that. What he did was call people to repentance. He called people to repent, and he announced the coming of the Lord. When he called, he said, “Repent. Come into agreement with God’s values. Come into agreement with God’s plans. Repent of wrong thinking.”*

*You see, wrong thinking leads to wrong feeling which leads to wrong doing. When we think rightly, we feel differently, and we act differently. Right thinking is critical. So when he says to repent, he is not just saying to stop the bad stuff. He is saying to embrace the right things, not just stay away from the negative. Embrace the positive.*

*It is more than just embracing values; it is embracing the plan so we are understanding this remarkable unfolding of God’s leadership in the midst of the unique dynamics of intensely positive and intensely negative happening globally at the same time. When the earth is confused, God has His messengers who get what is going on. They have repented of wrong thoughts and wrong values.*

* + 1. It is a *highway of purity* (God’s values) and a *highway of understanding* (God’s plans).
    2. We know that 40:3 includes preparing a spiritual highway in context to “spiritual” valleys, mountains, and crooked places because John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy in part by preaching on repentance that addressed spiritual valleys and mountains (Lk. 3:3-14).
    3. ***Agreement with God’s values***: John called people to repent and live in agreement with God’s values—His love, purity, humility, generosity, righteousness, etc. (Lk. 3:8-14). Earlier, Isaiah identified this as the *Highway of Holiness* (35:8). The only way that the Lord dwells with His people in is context to holiness or agreement with His heart.

8…bear fruits worthy of repentance…10The people asked…, “What shall we do then?”   
11He answered…, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none…” 12Then   
tax collectors…said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” 13And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed.” 14…The soldiers asked…“What shall we do?” So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.” (Lk. 3:8-14)

*In Luke 3, John called them to kingdom values. The main one he hit in Luke 3 was generosity. He was talking about economics. You can study that on your own, but as end-time messengers we want to learn from John in the way that John answered the Isaiah 40:3 call and build the spiritual highway. The way he answered that call is the way the end-time messengers will answer it, with the same kind of messaging.*

* + 1. ***Agreement with God’s plans***: John announced the coming of Jesus in context to a great outpouring of the Spirit and the release of God’s judgments associated with His coming.

16One mightier than I is coming…He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.   
17…He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire. (Lk. 3:16-17)

*John not only talked about kingdom character and values, he also announced the coming of Jesus. He announced the full power of the Holy Spirit. He announced God’s judgments. So when you say announcing the coming of the Messiah, it also goes with the great end-time revival of power, and it also comes with God intervening in the nations with judgments. All of that is one package together.*

*So John would tell them to have humility. He would tell them to have generosity and love, etc. Then he would tell them that there is going to be an unprecedented salvation event. A Man is coming out of heaven. God is going to be fully Man. The fire of the Spirit is coming, and judgments are going to break out. They were all thinking, “Like what are you talking about?”*

*It is like the Holy Spirit is saying, “End-time generation, take notes because this is the same messaging you will be carrying.” So, it is not only building a spiritual highway, it is also comforting Jerusalem, and there are two tracks of the message that are unfolding here.*

* 1. ***A voice***: John the Baptist was the voice prophesied by Isaiah (Jn. 1:23). For over 700 years, no one knew who “the voice” was or in what generation he would speak the message of 40:3-4.

22They said to him,…“What do you say about yourself?” 23He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the Lord,” ’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”   
(Jn. 1:22-23)

*Okay, Isaiah says there is a voice crying in the wilderness. A voice is crying in the wilderness. Now in Isaiah’s day, 700 years BC plus—he is a little bit more than that, 740 is when he actually started as most of them say—but 700 years before Christ, they did not know who this voice was or what it looked like. Again, it is not identified.*

* + 1. I assume that Isaiah would have never guessed that “the voice” referred to a man preaching on repentance about 700 years after Isaiah’s ministry was over.

*John comes on the scene in John 1. They ask, “Who are you? Are you the Messiah?”*

*He says, “No, I am the voice.”*

*They ask, “The voice?”*

*John nods, “Yeah, the Isaiah 40:3 voice.”*

*They are thinking, “Whoa! That is a big statement.”*

* + 1. I imagine the Pharisees asking him “Where was the highway of which Isaiah prophesied?”   
       In “building a highway” by calling people to repent, John introduced the idea of Isaiah’s highway also being a spiritual one. It was easier for the Pharisees to reject and criticize John as “the voice” since John did not do any miracles (Jn. 10:41).

41Then many came to Him and said, “John performed no sign …” (Jn. 10:41)

* + 1. John was content to be a voice—he was not seeking to be “a name” or to promote his own reputation and honor. He saw himself as a friend of the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:29).

29He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom…rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice…30He must increase, but I must decrease.   
(Jn. 3:29-30)

*The thing that really, really resonates with me about this is that John was content to be a voice and not be a name. When they came to John in John 3, they said, “Hey, more people are following your younger cousin. You have been doing this longer than he has. You are older.”*

*He said, “I have to decrease. This is not about me. I am not pulling people to me. I am a friend of the Bridegroom. I am trying to get them connected to Him, not to me.” So John was so content to be a voice and not be the name, the reputation. He said, “If they get connected to Him, I did my job. That is what the friend of the Bridegroom does.” John said that was what he was in John 3:29: the friend of the Bridegroom. The friend of the Bridegroom helps the Bride and the Bridegroom come into their embrace, and he gets out of the way. He is like the best man at the wedding. His whole job is to remove all the distractions so the Bride and Bridegroom connect eye to eye and nobody is in the way. That is the friend of the Bridegroom.*

* + 1. God is raising up those who will be a “voice” and not merely an “echo.”

*God is raising up messengers today who are not trying to figure out how popular they can be, how many likes or dislikes, or who is or is not for them. They are focused on a whole other thing that is on their mind: they are trying to get people gazing in His eyes to capture the reality of who they are in His eyes. They say, “I did my job; I will get out of the way.”*

*John was a voice. He was not a name. He was a voice, but not an echo either. What I mean by that. I have used that phrase over the years, “Be a voice, not an echo.” It is okay to use other people’s materials. I have done it all my life. I use ideas from others, but you do not want to be content simply repeating somebody else. You want to feel it. You want it to be real. If it is real in you, then you can use the information. If it is real in you, you can echo for a while, but eventually you want to be a voice and not just an echo. You want it to capture your thinking and dominate your internal conversation with the Lord. That is when you are a voice: when the messaging and the reality is in you at that level. That is what the Lord is raising up right now, voices that will be friends of the Bridegroom. They do not want to be a name. They are not trying to see how big they can get in the eyes of the popularity contest in the Christian world. They are wanting to get people connected to the Bridegroom God.*

* + 1. Gabriel prophesied that John the Baptist would turn many to the Lord (Lk. 1:16). In what sense did John “turn many to God” and “prepare people for the Lord?” Scripture only identifies two of John’s disciples that followed Jesus—Andrew and John (Jn. 1:40, many consider the unnamed disciple to be John). There were only 120 people who made it to the upper room after John and Jesus’ ministry (Acts 1).

16And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17He [John the Baptist] will also go before Him [Jesus]…to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Lk. 1:16-17)

* 1. ***Crying out***: John the Baptist refused to be silent even when rejected by the leaders of his nation. The religious leaders said John had a demon (Mt. 11:18) and Herod put him to death (Mt. 14:10).

18For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon.” (Mt. 11:18)

3For Herod…put him in prison for the sake of Herodias…4Because John had said to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her”…10So he sent and had John beheaded in prison.” (Mt. 14:3-10)

*It says that he is “crying out in the wilderness.” I like those words, crying out. It is a voice that is crying out. The reason that this touches me is that John refused to be silent. Crying out is cool as long as everybody in the crowd thinks what you are doing is really cool. Then it is like, “Wow, isn’t that gal or that guy passionate? Aren’t they passionate? Isn’t that amazing!” they are saying. The “crying out” is not measured in the context where people are affirming you. For John, the crying out was measured when the religious leaders of the nation turned against him. They said of him in Matthew 11:18, “He has a demon,” as in “He is demonized.” They did not say he was a cult leader. They said he was demonized. He is full-on demonized. This man is dangerous to the kingdom of God. That is what the top Bible teachers in the land said about John the Baptist.*

*Then Herod said, “If you do not stop interfering with my sexuality and practice, if you do not be quiet, I will kill you.” I do not know if the conversation went that way, but he was killed because in the cultural wars of his day he would not be silent.*

*In the cultural wars today, many believers are getting more and more silent. They want to be messengers, but they want to be messengers in a crowd of people that think they are amazing messengers. I like being in a crowd of people that think I’m amazing. You guys like me, right? Say, “I like you; you like me.” This is not where it works right here. This is cool. I like this. In all of that I was just joking. My point is: this is not where it counts. It counts when we go out there and in tenderness, yet in boldness and clarity, we hold the line. All the cultural wars that are increasing, increasing where the Word of God is being marginalized and set aside more and more, yet leaders in the Body of Christ are getting more and more silent. They are drawing back.*

*John the Baptist went the other direction. He went crying out! I do not mean he was belligerent—that is not the idea—or obnoxious. I believe he was bold, clear, tender, humble, and he would not back away under pressure. So the nation called him demonized, and Herod killed him because of his stance on morality. He refused to back away.*

* 1. ***Make straight*:** The Lord’s messengers make the message straight or clear by removing the ambiguity. They are to boldly, clearly, and tenderly address God’s values in speaking to individuals and in context of the cultural wars. For example, John rebuked Herod for immorality (Mt 14:3-10) and warned the people of covetousness (Lk. 3:8-14). Isaiah highlighted four aspects of walking on the spiritual highway. They reinforce the call to holiness and the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle. Because these four aspects include issues that anger and offend people, it is common for preachers not to address them in a straightforward way.

*Here was the mandate: he is to make straight the way of the Lord. Now, we know the highway has already been introduced a couple chapters earlier, Isaiah 35. It is a highway of holiness. This idea of holiness is kind of out of fashion in the Body of Christ today. Holiness is not out of fashion in the kingdom of God. From God’s point of view, holiness is the only way the highway works, when people agree with God about lifestyle, values, and sexuality, and their life choices come into agreement with Him.*

*It is a highway of holiness, but it is more than a highway of holiness, it is a highway of understanding too. It is agreeing with what He is doing, not just the values that He is calling us to. John the Baptist was, and the end-time messengers are, to make the highway straight. In other words, clear. Make it straight, not ambiguous. Do not say, “Well, you know, just love the Lord anyway you want to. The Lord just dah-da-da-da-dah” so everybody is happy and, you know, blah-blah-blah. Ambiguity, no. Political correctness is not the goal. I mean you do not want to pick a fight, but you do not want to be silenced or muffled into this vanilla ambiguity of political correctness where the Word of God is being thrown into the streets across the earth and trampled on, even by believers. Make it straight, Isaiah said. Make it clear. Remove the gray areas. Be bold. Be tender, but be bold. Be straight forward. Again, it is a highway of purity and it is a highway of understanding.*

*Now he is going to give four aspects of this highway. Though for this passage, Isaiah 40, this is a spiritual highway, actually these very things will happen when the physical highway is made as well. These will have a physical counterpart when that eschatological, millennial highway is built about which Isaiah has eight or nine passages. Again, I have not actually counted the number, but the list is about that long.*

*Now all four of these areas of the highway that we are going to call this emotional and spiritual life, all four of these are politically incorrect if you address them straightforwardly. When I look at all four of these and what they mean, I ask, “Lord, what man or woman in the kingdom of God will be straightforward on these issues?” Because, if they are, they will lose part of their following. If they are after a following, they will not build a highway with these four elements in it.*

* + 1. ***Every valley shall be exalted***: There are valleys or low areas in our lives emotionally and spiritually that need to be healed and brought up. This includes areas where we have wrong thinking in accepting a low view of God and of our spiritual identity. This includes emotional low spots where rejection, condemnation, and inferiority dominate our heart and mind. The Lord wants us to resist wrong thinking and replace it with the truth of who we are in Christ.

*First it says that every valley must be exalted. Now the valley, again it was spiritual and it was emotional in John the Baptist’s day. There are the low areas in our life. This is more of the easy one to address, but still we tend to do it a little bit and then kind of move out of the way. We don’t want to get too into somebody’s life, too into their stuff. The low areas of people’s lives emotionally and spiritually need to be healed, God would say, “I want to bring those valleys up.” They include wrong thinking in accepting a low view of God and a low view of who they are in God.*

*It includes the emotional low spots. There are many believers who are just absolutely trapped in rejection, condemnation, and an inferiority complex. A negation of everything positive, it hits them and bounces off. The Lord would say, “I want to build that highway up. They are going to be on the highway partnering with Me. They have to agree with Me even about themselves and about their own life. They have to agree with what I say about them.”*

*The Lord wants us to resist wrong thinking and replace it with right thinking. That is the more popular topic to address, again as long as you do not get too personal with an individual. As long as you just keep it public and generic, they will not be bothered by it. You talk to somebody up close and personal about these issues, and they will not like that at all.*

* + 1. ***Every mountain shall be brought low***: There are high things or proud things in our thinking and emotional life that need to be brought down such as drawing undue attention to ourselves, manipulating situations to gain honor, or being defensive in refusing to accept correction.

*Well, the next one is far more politically incorrect. Every mountain—all the high and proud things—bring it down. There are the high things that need to be brought down. It is pride, which we all are born with, that we all come by naturally. I’ll just give three examples out of a hundred: drawing undue attention to ourselves. Manipulating situations to gain honor. Pouting, complaining, pushing your way until you get your way. Defensiveness when you are corrected, on and on and on. Again you can talk about that publicly a little bit, but you do not want to get personal on that one at all.*

* + 1. ***The crooked places shall be made straight***: Crooked places speak of areas where people continue to live in compromise, including immorality, drunkenness, covetousness, slander, along with various addictions or areas of perversion. Jesus highlighted drunkenness and immorality in context to the escalation of end times pressures and temptations (Lk 21:34-36). There will be more fear, lust, demons, etc., thus a heightened desire to “self-medicate to escape pain” with immorality and drunkenness, etc.

*Then the crooked places have to be made straight. These are the areas of compromise. These are the areas of addiction, the areas of perversion. These are the areas of sexuality, of covetousness, all these areas that are crooked in the Body of Christ. The Lord told John the Baptist, “I want you to address these things.” Of course he addressed them. Covetousness and immorality were the two things he went on record for more than anything else, in terms of the biblical record.*

*Make straight the crooked places. In the cultural wars, say what God says. Be clear what the Word of God says. In Luke 21:34-36, Jesus said, “In the day when a great snare comes upon the whole earth,” He said, “watch out.” He highlighted immorality and drunkenness. He said those will be two of the main things that the enemy will use in the Body of Christ–drunkenness and immorality. The Body of Christ is rife with immorality in America and all over the world. You just don’t hardly hear anything about it in a pulpit because one cannot build any momentum with people if you address those issues directly.*

*He said, “Make the crooked places straight.” Now when some people get direct, they get hostile. Direct does not mean to be mean. Direct does not mean lacking tenderness. Direct does not mean that you got to psych yourself up to say it, or to go win an argument. That is not what direct means. Direct is tender, clear, bold. And, you have to be resolved in your private life on the issues before you get into the proclamation or the conversation, because you will get into a funny spirit unless you are clear this is about God’s glory and God’s wisdom.*

* + 1. ***The rough places shall be made smooth***: Being in a rough place emotionally is to live in a judgmental, critical spirit or with a mean or critical spirit such as many of the Pharisees had.

*Then the rough places made smooth. That is the harshness, the critical spirit, the judgmental, the mean-spirited Pharisees. They had rough places in their life, in leadership. There are a lot of rough places in homes and the way men lead their homes and their families, in the way leaders lead their businesses, both men and women. The way pastors lead. Rough places where people are muscled and bullied and all kinds of things.*

*The Lord would say, “I want all four of these areas addressed in the messenger ministry, because I need people who agree in these areas.” Because, if they come into agreement, the glory of God will move in them and through them.*

* 1. ***All flesh shall see it*** ***together***: Isaiah anchored this “messenger mandate” in an end-time context when all nations see the glory of God (40:5). Thus, the primary context of 40:1-11 is on preparing people spiritually for Jesus’ second coming when all the nations will see His glory (40:5, 10).

3“…make straight in the desert a highway for our God…5the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together…”10Behold, the Lord God shall come… (Isa. 40:3-5, 10)

* + 1. Jesus will be seen by every eye when He returns (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7).

7Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him… (Rev. 1:7)

* + 1. In context to John the Baptist’s ministry, *not* *everyone saw God’s glory* as Isaiah prophesied (40:5). Thus, John was only a partial fulfillment of the 40:3-5 prophecy.

*Then, just to say it again, the context of Isaiah 40 is clearly an end-time context. There will be such unique dynamics. There will be more lust, more demons, more bitterness, more fear, and more desire to self-medicate the closer we get to the Lord. That is why Jesus said in Luke 21 not to self-medicate through immorality and drunkenness when the pressure builds. Watch, wait, interact with Him and do it in community. Like I said, we cannot get this message without the Holy Spirit helping us. We cannot get it alone either; we get it in community. We cannot get it without eating the scroll, without really spending time personally going after it. So I have to go after it, I need the Spirit’s help, and I need you if I am going to get it. We have to do it together. Well, that is the highway.*

* 1. The end-time call to prepare a people for God includes *the* *Bride* being made ready (Rev. 19:7) and *all Israel* (unsaved survivors of the Tribulation) receiving Him to fulfill His prophecy (Mt. 23:39).

7…for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)

39…I say to you, you [the leaders in Jerusalem] shall see Me no more till you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Mt. 23:39)

* + 1. I assume that Elijah (Mal. 4:6) and/or the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-6) will be the primary “voices” fulfilling the prophesy of 40:3-4 supported by many thousands of messengers from all over the earth—who will give expression to the “messenger calling” in their local area.
    2. Elijah and the two witnesses will do many miracles (Rev. 11:3-6)—this is in line with what Isaiah prophesied, saying that all flesh would see God’s glory together (40:5).
  1. Will you answer this call to prepare yourself to prepare others spiritually to be messengers also?
  2. ***The mouth of the Lord has spoken***: This emphasized the certainty of these things coming to pass.

5The glory of the Lord shall be revealed…for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. (Isa. 40:5)

1. God’s plans, purposes, and promises will last forever (40:6-8)
   1. Isaiah emphasized the certainty of victory before the hostile Gentile armies of the earth.   
      Nothing can prevail over God’s plans, purposes, and promises—they are eternal (40:6-8).

6The 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. 7The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath   
of the Lord blows upon it…8The grass withers…but the word of our God stands forever.”   
(Isa. 40:6-8)

*That is the main part of Isaiah 40. The other part is glorious; we will just take a few minutes on it. It is just about the power and, if I had to summarize the rest of Isaiah 40 I would summarize it, God is all loving, all powerful, and all wise. He is all loving. He wants your best. He is all wise, He knows your best. He is all powerful. He can help you do your best. That is really the theme of the rest of Isaiah 40, but we are going to look at it just a little bit.*

*So then this unidentified voice says to Isaiah, “Cry out.”*

*Isaiah is asking, “Okay, what is the message? What am I supposed to cry out? I know I am supposed to comfort Jerusalem; that is part one. I know I am going to build a spiritual highway where I address these four issues in people’s lives and in the culture. Ugh, I do not want to address those four issues in the culture or even in my own life.” Maybe. Maybe he did not say that. I do not know.*

*Now the Lord adds another dimension. He said, verse 6, “Cry out.”*

*Isaiah answered, “What? What is the message?”*

*The answer is that you have to get foundational on this. The foundational part of the message, “All flesh is grass. Its loveliness appears for a moment like a flower and it is gone really soon.” So do not be afraid of your enemies; they will be gone in a minute. Do not seize every opportunity to self-aggrandize your life. Do not do that because your beauty is going to be gone in a minute too. Your enemies’ power and lust are going to be gone, so do not overly worry about it, and so is yours, so do not invest all your life in that. There is a bigger storyline called the Word of God, so do not let your enemies get you off course, and do not let your own pleasure and agenda, your own beauty, and your own achievements get you off course. All flesh is grass. The good, the bad, the ugly will be gone in a minute, related to your life. Stay focused on the big picture is what he is saying here.*

*Verse 7, “The grass withers.” That enemy will not be there in a little while, and he has no voice at the judgment seat anyway. Why are you letting the enemy dominate the conversation of your life internally? The grass withers. Why are you letting your own beauty and your own glory dominate you? You are more than beauty and glory in human achievements. You are a believer. You are part of the family of God. You are messengers at a critical time in history.*

*Verse 8, “The grass withers, but the plan of God, the purpose of God, stands forever.” The promises will stand when the enemy is gone. The enemy will wear out. The promise of God on your life and over the earth is true. I want to invest myself in the purpose of God because it will last forever.*

* 1. ***What shall I cry***: Isaiah had just exhorted the Lord’s messengers to “cry out” in comforting Jerusalem (40:2), he spoke of “crying out” to prepare the way of the Lord (40:3), and now a voice spoke to Isaiah of “crying out” (40:6).
     1. Isaiah was asking for more specifics on the message that he was to “cry out” as he called messengers to comfort Jerusalem and to prepare people for the Lord. The Lord answered Isaiah by telling him that all flesh is grass (40:6-7) and that God’s plans and power will prevail over all obstacles and will last forever (40:8-26).
     2. I see the message in Isaiah 40:6-31 as giving insight into the spiritual diet on which John the Baptist fed and what he spoke to others to prepare them for the Lord. End-time messengers will follow John’s example in preaching these themes alongside the truths outlined in 40:1-5.
  2. ***All flesh is grass***: Isaiah was to proclaim the truth about humanity—its enemies and opportunities. Solomon cried out, “Vanity of vanities” (Eccl. 1:2-3). Thus, even “good things” that are done outside of God’s will are vanity. What matters most are the things that have value after our death.

2“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” 3What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? (Eccl. 1:2-3)

* 1. ***Grass***: Isaiah also spoke of the enemies of God’s people as being a weak as grasshoppers (40:22).
  2. ***Stands forever***: The plans and promises of God will stand forever. They will continue long after sin and Satan are gone from the earth. It is wise to invest our lives in the purpose of God that will last forever. The word of God is permanent. This is the only measurement of reality.

1. The mighty Warrior is a tender Shepherd (isa. 40:9-11)
   1. Believers in Jerusalem are to boldly proclaim the coming of Messiah as a mighty warrior who is also a tender shepherd (40:9-11). Believers in Jerusalem mentioned here will be emboldened as the global body of Christ comforts and strengthens them (40:1). Note that Jerusalem and Zion are nearly interchangeable in most Scriptures.

9O 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! 10…[He] shall come with a strong hand, and…shall rule.” (Isa. 40:9-10)

*Now he is going to shift gears here. He says, in a sense, “Let me tell you a little bit about the coming of the Lord now. Let’s get back to the coming-of-the-Lord message.” This is part of the message. In verse 9, he shifts gears because he started telling a messenger to go comfort Jerusalem, and now he is going to tell Jerusalem that it is good that you were comforted and strengthened by the global Body of Christ because now, Jerusalem, you must take a stand.*

*He says, “Zion.” Again Zion is almost interchangeable with Jerusalem. He says, ‘You speak the good news too, Jerusalem.” He goes on, “And you get up on a mountain.” Now we all know this verse, “Get up on a mountain. Lift your voice,” but we might not be thinking of the context because at the end of the age when the whole earth sees the glory of God, Jerusalem is surrounded by hostile anti-Semitic nations in the Antichrist empire. The Antichrist is wanting to destroy them, and they are supposed to get up boldly and talk about Jesus coming to overthrow everybody.*

*I could picture the guys in Jerusalem. I know Asher will do it no matter what. I can just picture human beings in Jerusalem saying, “No, it is your turn. I preached last time.”*

*He says, “Get up on a high mountain…lift your voice…do not be afraid…say to the surrounding cities,” because the Antichrist armies will have a siege around all of Judah and Jerusalem. They will be invading. They will be hostile. In essence, he says, “I want you to take the lead and tell them the gospel story.”*

*I am trying to picture this. What manner of man or woman will do this? I mean, already most believers in Jerusalem that I know say, “Well, they will not let us talk about Jesus and evangelize, so we have to be really careful.”*

*Isaiah said, in effect, “Get up with a bullhorn and make it loud!”*

*I look at that, and I think, “Gee whiz! This is when the Antichrist is in power, surrounding them!”*

*When I look at verse 9 and the mandate of Jerusalem to take a stand within their community and their local area, with all the hostility, then I back up to verse 1 where the Lord says, “I told you guys to go strengthen Jerusalem. You need to strengthen them because there is an hour coming when they are going to need to be strong. They need to stand in an hour that you cannot comprehend. They need the whole global Body of Christ together with them.”*

* 1. ***The context***: Jesus warned the people in Jerusalem to flee when they saw the abomination of desolation (Mt. 24:15-16) because an Antichrist attack against Jerusalem and Judea would begin very soon after the abomination of desolation. It is important to understand what the Bible says about the context of Jerusalem at the end of the age to fully grasp the implications of the exhortation in 40:9.

15“…when you see the ‘abomination of desolation’…standing in the holy place… 16let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” (Mt. 24:15-16)

*Jesus said, “When you see the abomination of desolation,” which is really the Antichrist empire and the Antichrist worship movement centering in on Jerusalem, when you see the Antichrist put up his image in Jerusalem—that is the abomination of desolation—and demand to be worshipped, verse 16, “let those who are in Judea get out.” Not just get out of Jerusalem, but get out of Judea. Get out of the surrounding area, because Judea is the area round about. Go far away!*

*Well, Isaiah is talking to people who stayed. Most fled, but some of them are still there. He is telling them not to be afraid. Yes, you may be martyred. Jesus said that they may kill your body, but they cannot hurt you. He said that in Matthew 10:27-29. I read that a few times, thinking, “Huh.”*

*He said, in essence, “You are going to live for billions and billions and billions of years with a physical resurrected body and the glory of God. They cannot take anything from you at all. So what if they kill you?”*

* + 1. Jerusalem will be surrounded by the armies of the Antichrist (Zech. 12:2).

2Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. (Zech. 12:2)

* + 1. Jerusalem will be taken by the armies of the Antichrist (Zech. 14:2).

2For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken…  
Half of the city shall go into captivity… (Zech. 14:2)

*Zechariah 14:2, all the nations will be gathered around Jerusalem when Jerusalem is saying this. So again, when I look at verse 9, and I see my brothers and sisters in Zion or Jerusalem—use it interchangeably—lifting their voice to preach the gospel of Jesus and the coming of a King from the sky to absolutely destroy the Antichrist, that message will probably bother their fellow Jewish people as well as the Antichrist people all around the nations. He says to do it. He says, as it were, “Gentile Body of Christ, you must be strengthening them and supporting them and building spiritual highways before this thing comes to a head.” When I look at Isaiah 40, I realize this is really intense.*

* + 1. ***Cities of Judah***: A hostile culture of anti-Semitism at that time will make it challenging for believers in Jerusalem to boldly lift their voice without fear to the cities of Judah (40:9). There will be a company of believers in Jerusalem who proclaim to the cities of Judah that Jesus is coming, even as the Antichrist is surrounding them in a siege.
    2. ***Good tidings:*** This speaks of the truths related to the gospel of the kingdom (Mt. 24:14), the return of Jesus (40:10-11), and the victory and honor of Jerusalem in the Millennium (40:1-2).
    3. ***Get up on a mountain***: Messianic believers are to boldly proclaim the coming of Jesus to overthrow the Antichrist and deliver Israel. Currently believers in Jerusalem are forbidden by the authorities to evangelize the Jewish people. The witness of believers in Jerusalem is important for many in Israel to understand who Jesus is when He returns (Mt. 23:39).
  1. ***Lift up your voice***: There will be a company of believers in Jerusalem boldly telling the region of Judah that Jesus is coming, even as the Antichrist’s armies surround them.
     1. Imagine a Jewish man in the Warsaw ghetto in Poland (surrounded by the Nazis) proclaiming that a Jewish King was coming to free them, kill the Nazis, and exalt Israel to be the leading nation on earth. This message has caused trouble for Jewish people through history—that God will exalt them and kill their enemies. Even some of the fellow prisoners in the Warsaw ghetto might be angry at that message, along with the Nazi leadership.
     2. ***Do not be afraid***: Some in Jerusalem will be tempted to draw back in silence out of fear.   
        The cities of Judah will be experiencing intense military conflict, hostility, and oppression. Boldly declaring that their Messiah is coming to crush the Antichrist will anger many.
        1. It is important to be intentional about gaining understanding of these things now before the pressure greatly increases and, along with it, the fear that naturally comes.
        2. Some will wait until the time of intense pressure before they start to search out what the Scripture says about standing with Israel in the end-time conflict. It is best to be rooted in the truth now. It is more difficult to see clearly and to be objective about what the Bible says if one only starts to search it out once already in the storm of pressure.
     3. ***Jerusalem and the cities of Judah***: There will be an important relational dynamic between Jerusalem and the cities of Judah in context to the end-time conflicts (Zech. 12:4-7).   
        The Lord will come to Jerusalem from Bozrah, possibly marching through Judah (63:1-6).

4In that day “…I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples [Antichrist’s armies] with blindness. 5The governors of Judah shall say in their heart, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the Lord…’ 6I will make the governors of Judah…like a fiery torch…they shall devour all the surrounding peoples…” 7The Lord will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of…the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. (Zech. 12:4-7)

* + - 1. ***Jerusalem is my strength in the Lord***: The governors or political leaders of Judah will be strengthened by the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zech. 12:5)—this may include the “message” that they receive from them as prophesied by Isaiah (40:9).
      2. ***Open My eyes on Judah***: The leaders of Judah will receive supernatural help from the Lord who will strike the horses of the Antichrist armies with blindness and make Judah like a fiery torch to devour the Antichrist armies surrounding them.
      3. ***Tents of Judah***: Those in Judah will be in a more defenseless condition, as suggested by dwelling in tents outside the well-defended Jerusalem. The Lord will empower the soldiers in Judah *first*, possibly to create a greater bond of unity with Jerusalem (Zech. 12:7).
      4. This bond of unity will help end the long-standing tensions in the Jewish leadership (Zech. 11:6, 14). Zechariah prophesied that both the “house of Judah” in the south (Zech. 10:3, 6) and the “house of Joseph” (Zech. 10:6-7) in the north would be anointed for battle, not just those in Jerusalem.
  1. ***Behold God shall come***: The messianic believers in Jerusalem will proclaim the coming of Jesus in power to prevail against the Antichrist (40:10).

10Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand… (Isa. 40:10)

*Tell them your God is coming. This is one of the most descriptive passages about the second coming, about exactly what Jesus will do when He comes. You know, we have a lot of passages where it says that He comes. Then there are passages where we see fire and glory and angels and all the saints and a trumpet and the archangels. We get the phenomena around Him, but we do not have so many passages that tell us the details of what the Man Christ Himself does in His activities.*

* 1. Isaiah describes seven activities of Jesus coming to earth with a strong hand (40:10-11). This is one of the most descriptive passages about what Jesus will do when He returns in strength. He will come as a mighty warrior (40:10) and a tender shepherd (40:11)–so strong, yet so tender.

10…the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him…His reward   
is with Him, and His work before Him. 11He 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.   
(Isa. 40:10-11)

*There are seven activities. In verse 10, God comes in the person of Jesus. He does not come as a weak lamb to be slaughtered. He comes with a strong hand, mighty and powerful. He is going to rule the nations. He is not coming to be put on a cross. He is coming to be put on a throne. He is coming to remove all the evil leaders on the earth.*

*He is going to have His reward with Him. He is going to vindicate His people. He is going to reward everyone who stood for Him in righteousness. When these people were being persecuted and mocked and laughed at, He said, “I will make it up to you more than you would ever imagine. I am coming with a memory of everything you did standing true to Me. All the lust you turned away, all the opportunities you lost because you were eating the scroll and pouring your time in. Then the other opportunities you lost because you spoke out loud what you studied in the Word.”*

*Beloved, you will lose opportunities. You will lose a lot of opportunities just by the sheer hours it takes you to do this. Then you will lose another set of opportunities by saying what you discovered. He said, “I will reward you.” His work is before Him, He will feed His flock like a Shepherd. He will gather the lambs. He will carry them in His bosom. He will gather them and carry them like this and lead them gently.*

* 1. ***The Lord shall come with a strong hand***: The messianic believers in Jerusalem will proclaim the coming of Jesus in power to prevail against the Antichrist. The most detailed description of Jesus coming with a *strong hand* is found in the book of Revelation. The Lord will not be passive. Throughout history Israel and the nations have accused God of being passive because He has been patient and has not intervened with great strength like He will. This is their question in 40:27.
     1. ***His arm shall rule***: He will take over all the governments of the earth (Rev. 11:15).

*So number one, His arm will rule. He is going to take over all the governments.*

* + 1. ***To reward***: He will reward and vindicate His people who have been persecuted as outcasts. His reward is with Him (Rev. 11:18; 20:4-6; 22:12). He will reward those who spoke His message boldly and who refused compromise in times of pressure and temptation.

12“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” (Rev. 22:12)

*I already mentioned number two. He is going to vindicate and reward everyone who stayed true to Him in their character. Amidst a global vomiting of immorality, and a man or a woman stays clean and says no to that, and they are turning away all these other opportunities because they love the Lamb of God. They will follow Him wherever He goes.*

*His work is before him. He is going to bring down the New Jerusalem. He is going to fill the earth with the glory of God. The garden of Eden is going to expand progressively worldwide. He is going to completely heal and restore the animals, the atmosphere, the agriculture. All the angels are coming down. It is amazing. His work is right in front of him. Ooh, shundi-muhundi! Oh boy! I am just having fun. Okay, I will not do that again.*

* + - 1. Jesus will reward the times that His people lost opportunities for personal gain because of taking time to pour over the Word to learn it and the time they invested in intercession and in ministering to the needs of others.
      2. In this context, He will vindicate all those in Jerusalem who boldly proclaimed to the cities of Judah the end-time message of Jesus coming with a strong hand.
    1. ***His work is before Him***: His work includes causing the New Jerusalem to descend to the earth (Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 10), establishing in social order based on righteousness and justice in all the nations, and restoring animal life, the atmosphere, and the agriculture to the conditions seen in the garden of Eden (Isa. 11:6-9; 35:1-8; 51:3; 65:17-25; Ezek. 34:29; 36:35; 47:6-12).
    2. ***He will feed His flock***:He will provide abundantly to meet basic human needs like food, water, clothing, shelter, etc. In the context of the end times, many people—both Jews and Gentile—will be refugees or in prison camps. Jesus will rescue them and provide food for them as they endure an arduous journey walking to Israel (Mic. 5:4; 7:14).

4And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord… (Mic 5:4)

9That You may say to the prisoners, “Go forth,”…They shall feed along the roads…  
10They shall neither hunger nor thirst…He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them…12Surely these shall come from afar; Look! Those from the north and the west, and these from the land of Sinim [China]. (Isa. 49:9-12)

*Okay, number four, He will feed His flock. Now this is strange: feed His flock. It’s like, “What do you mean, feed His flock?” You have to remember there are going to be thousands and thousands of Jews, maybe millions, I do not know, who are refugees, driven out of their homes by antisemitism, and another multitude who are actually in prison camps. I mean, it is the Adolph-Hitler thing, but a man far more powerful than Adolph Hitler is coming on the world scene, far more attractive, far more powerful, far more cruel than Adolph Hitler. He wants to annihilate the Jewish people. He wants to take up where Hitler left off and finish it. He will not, but that is what he wants to do.*

*There will be Jewish refugees all over the earth, fleeing to safety. God will require the Gentile Body of Christ to be like the Corrie Ten Boom and put them in their homes to bear it with them all the way. There will be many who will go to prison camps, Jews and Gentiles. When Jesus comes—and there is a surprising amount of information about this in the Bible; you just do not hear about it much. As we go through these chapters we will run into it over and over again—Jesus is the greater Moses who liberates the slaves. He actually leads them back to Jerusalem like Joshua. Like I said last week, He is the greater Moses that liberated the captives. Their greater Joshua that led them back and took the land. The greater David that captured Jerusalem, the greater Elijah that destroyed the false prophets, and on and on and on. He is all of those things.*

* + - 1. There are many documentaries of what life was like immediately following World War II. Millions of people had to walk back to their city. Many had to walk hundreds of miles. They could only carry a small amount of food and water.

*Here is the point. Have you ever watched the documentaries of life after World War II? Millions of people moving through the nations. I have watched them many, many times, and I think of it as a snapshot of what is going to happen with the Antichrist. I look at that, and that is a low version of what is going to happen when this man gets in power. Millions are homeless, I mean even just Gentiles. Prisons–you know the Germans that were in prison in Russia. The Russians that were in prison in Germany. They all walked back, hundreds and hundreds of miles back home, with no water, no food, no clothing. Millions that were migrating and moving from nation to nation. It was the most horrible couple-year story after World War II.*

* + - 1. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would provide food and water supernaturally for those making the long journey back to their home town. This is a very significant.

*Well, this is going to happen in a more intense way. When Jesus says, “I will feed them,” that is a massive statement, because you can carry only so much food and water with you when you are walking. He says, as it were, “I am going to create supernatural food. I am going to create water on the mountains to give My people water. I gave water in the wilderness with Moses. I am going to have water flow on mountains, and I am going to provide water. My people are going to make it back.” This is massive.*

*When He says He is going to gather them, He means the refugees of this dispersion, in this horrible situation of the refugees coming back. Many of the refugees are in just all the nations. They were never in Israel, but are coming back to Israel. Some are coming back to Israel; others are just in hiding.*

* + 1. ***He will gather the lambs***: Jesus will gather His people in several ways. He will gather the saints together in the sky at the rapture, and He will gather the unsaved remnant of Israel, some who are refugees and some in prison camps (Isa 27:12; Mic. 2:12; Zech. 10:10).

12…in that day that the Lord will thresh, from the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. (Isa. 27:12)

12“…I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep…they shall make a loud noise because of so many people.” (Mic. 2:12)

10I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, until no more room is found for them. (Zech. 10:10)

* + 1. ***He will carry them in His bosom***: He will carry His people (46:3-4; Deut. 1:31; Lk. 15:4). This is not poetry; this is real. Here we see His tender heart and care for His people. He will rescue them and lead them back to Israel. He will treat them with affection and tenderness.

3“Listen to Me…all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been upheld by Me from birth, who have been carried from the womb…4even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” (Isa. 46:3-4)

31…in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place. (Deut. 1:31)

*Number six, He will carry them, these broken lives. I have seen the documentaries. Many of you know of Auschwitz and Dachau. The camps opened, and the broken lives were freed, and Allies came. You have seen the documentaries, and you are thinking, “What just happened?”*

* + 1. ***He will gently lead those who are with young:*** Multitudes of refugees and those who were held as captives will walk back to Israel (Isa. 42:16; 49:9-12). He will be especially attentive to those traveling with small children (Jer. 31:8).

8Behold, I will….gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there… 9I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters… (Jer. 31:8-9)

16I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. (Isa. 42:16)

9You may say to the prisoners, “Go forth”…10He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them. 11I will make each of My mountains a road, and My highways shall be elevated. 12Surely these shall come from afar (Isa. 49:9-12)

*Jesus said, in effect, “I am actually going to be personally involved. I am going to carry them tenderly, I am going to feed them. I am going to lead them gently.” This is actual. This is not just poetic symbolism. This is real, because it is going to happen in real time and space.*

1. The Lord has all power and wisdom (isa. 40:12-20)
   1. The emphasis of 40:12-20 is that God is *all loving* (40:11), *all wise* (40:12-14), and *all powerful* (40:15-17). Because God is all loving, He desires our best; because He is all wise, He knows what is best for us; and because He is all powerful, He can accomplish it—He fulfills all His promises.
   2. Jesus is great in power and wisdom; thus, He understands everything, fulfills all of His promises, and perfectly administrates justice (40:12-14). Isaiah describes the vast range of God’s wisdom and power from the vastness of the heavens to intricate details in the dust. He measures the distances between the stars, yet notices the small details about pieces of dust, and can navigate the complex issues such as weighing mountains still attached to the large land masses of the earth.

12Who 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? 13Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him?   
14With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? (Isa. 40:12-14)

* + 1. Isaiah asked two questions (40:12-14)—who measured creation and who taught God?
    2. ***Measured heaven***: Who has such vast wisdom and power that that they can count the stars, yet be so detailed that they can calculate the dust? God does all of this easily so there is no need to be afraid of the Assyrians in Isaiah’s day or the Antichrist at the end of the age.
    3. ***Who directed the Lord***: Isaiah emphasized the issue of trusting His leadership (30:13-14, 28). He asked who taught God or who improved the wisdom of God’s leadership. Resisting fear and trusting the Lord’s leadership is a central issue in the generation the Lord returns.
    4. ***Who taught God justice***: Paul quoted this passage in Romans 11:34. The issue of justice is brought up again in 40:27.
  1. The Lord has the power to easily overpower all opposition and solve all problems (40:15-17).   
     Isaiah emphasized how powerful God is and how small and weak everything is compared to Him.

15Behold, 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. 16And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. 17All nations [Antichrist’s empire] before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. (Isa. 40:15-17)

*This is the part that is pretty well self-explanatory, so I do not have to go into a lot of detail. Although, when I make my upgraded note—I always upgrade the notes—I will have a lot of information on this, a lot more than I have here.*

*He says, as it were, “Are you afraid of all this trouble? Who is the One who measures the oceans in His hand? Who measures the distance between the stars with the span of His hand? Who is so detailed they can calculate and count the pieces of sand or dust? Who has the ability and the discernment to weigh mountains?” How do you weigh a mountain? Are you going to pull the mountain up and put it on a scale, put the mountain back? How do you weigh it? It is not just strength; it is skill. How do you weigh a mountain? You got to disconnect it to get it on the scale, right? He says that God does all of this easily. You are afraid of the Antichrist? You are afraid of trouble for a short period of time? Do you realize who is on your side? Now, again, he is speaking of the Assyrians in Isaiah’s day, but this chapter is more eschatological, although I appreciate that for 2,700 years in redemptive history it has been a blessing. It is going to be life to millions and millions of people in that day.*

* + 1. ***The nations***: The combined power of nations is insignificant in their ability to challenge and prevail against God. They are compared to a drop of water or to small dust. Their princes and judges (40:23) are weak as grasshoppers in God’s sight (40:22)

*He says, “All the nations are a drop in the bucket.” He does not mean nations are not valuable. He means nations in their coalitions to resist the will of God are as dust. The Antichrist army and coalition of multitudes of nations in the biggest army, the biggest amount of resources, the biggest military buildup, the biggest public support of any leader in history, verse 15, the Lord says, “They are nothing. They have no ability to stop Me. I am the King. They are counted like a dust on a scale. You take all the millions of the Antichrist armies against Israel,” the Lord says, “how much they can resist Me? It is like not quite an ounce, a speck.”*

*He communicates in verse 17, “The nations are nothing. They cannot stop Me. Are you kidding Me? Because they have more people and more power and more military, more resource, more public support?” He went on, “Nobody can stop Me. I measure stars with the span of My hand. I measure the oceans. I count the dust. I have the detail. I have the macro and the micro all down. Really, nothing escapes My notice. Nothing escapes My notice.”*

* + - 1. The powerful empires of the ancient world like Assyria, Babylon, and Rome, and even the end-time empire of the Antichrist, are no greater challenge to God than a mere drop of water.
      2. ***Very little***: The small island nations are considered by God as a very little thing. What seems like a big threat or obstacle to man is, in fact, a very small thing to God.
      3. ***All nations***: The Antichrist’s empire with its 10-nation confederation will have more money, technology, military power, and public support than any other empire in history. This coalition of nations will not be able to prevail against God.

19And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. (Rev. 19:19)

* + - 1. The message is that Israel should not be afraid of them as long they are embracing God’s leadership. Compared to God, these empires have no real power.
    1. ***Lebanon is not sufficient***: If all the trees in the vast forests in Lebanon were burned together to create the largest altar of sacrifice possible, and if the many beasts in Lebanon were offered on that altar—even on a scale so large, such a sacrifice would not be a sufficient expression of worship that is due our glorious and majestic God. If these vast forests were all set on fire and all its animals offered as sacrifices to God, it would not be an adequate expression of the devotion that is due to God. Isaiah’s point is that that largest and the most extravagant offering that people could possibly give to God would not equal His greatness.
  1. No force on earth can compare to or prevail against King Jesus (40:18-20). In 40:12-17, Isaiah set forth the reasons why none can compare in power to our *God as Creator*;nowin 40:18-24 he focuses the power of *God as Ruler* of the nations.

18To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? 19The workman molds an image, the goldsmith overspreads it with gold, and the silversmith casts silver chains. 20Whoever 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. (Isa. 40:18-20)

* + 1. ***Who is like God***: He is the only One powerful enough to look to and to trust in as our source. The Lord is incomparable in power to idols made by people and empowered by demons.
    2. Paul highlighted the demonic element that is involved in worshipping idols (1 Cor. 10:19-20)

19What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 20Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice [to idols] they sacrifice to demons… (1 Cor. 10:19-20)

* + 1. Multitudes will marvel at the Antichrist, seeing him as incomparable in power (Rev. 13:3-8).

3And all the world marveled and followed the beast… 4they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast?”… 8All who dwell on the earth will worship him…(Rev. 13:3-8)

* + 1. The truth of God being incomparably greater in power than idols was to be applied in Isaiah’s day, but also by those who fear the demonic power behind idols in the Antichrist’s global worship system. Idols will be associated with the image of Antichrist (Rev. 9:20; 13:8, 15).

20But the rest of mankind…did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood… (Rev. 9:20)

* + 1. After Jesus returns, He will remove the many idols throughout Israel that had been associated with the Antichrist’s worship system related to the mark of the Beast (Zech. 13:2)

2“…in that day,” says the Lord…“I will cut off the names of the idols from the land…  
I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.” (Zech. 13:2)

* + 1. ***The workman molds an image***: Mere men are involved in every stage of making an idol—from molding it and overlaying it with a precious metal, to finding a skillful workman to make its base secure. He points how foolish it is to worship and trust idols, which are created by men.
    2. ***Whoever is too impoverished***: The perceived power of an idol was proportionate to the value of the materials that were used in constructing it. For example, idols made only of wood were less powerful than those covered with gold and precious stones. Isaiah pointed out that some only had enough money to choose a wood that will not rot to construct their idol. The idol was only as strong as materials and the builder who fashioned it and carved its base.

1. The Lord has power over all the nations (isa. 40:21-26)
   1. The Lord has power over all the nations and their leadership (40:21-24).

21Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?...  
22It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers…  
23He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. 24Scarcely 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. (Isa. 40:21-24)

*He said in verse 21, “Have you not even heard? Have you not been told from the beginning?” You see, these are Jewish people who grew up with this knowledge, but they are overwhelmed with fear of the Assyrian, the superpower, that is surrounding their land. Isaiah asked, “Have you not been raised with this information?”*

*Though Isaiah said that to the people of his day, fast forward 2,700 plus years to the Body of Christ and the question would be, “Wait, haven’t you studied the Word of God? Why are we backing away in compromise? Are we afraid of this man? So what if he did kill us? We are going to live forever, billions of years, with a resurrected body in an eternal city with the glory of God. Our Messiah is with us forever with His reward in His hand.”*

* + 1. ***Have you not known***: Isaiah brought up information related to God’s greatness with which many were familiar. They grew up with this knowledge, but without engaging with it in their lives, they were now overwhelmed with fear of their enemies. Isaiah was saying, “You know the information, but you must engage with it by waiting on God” (v. 31).
    2. ***Sits above the circle of the earth***: The Lord sits enthroned with power over the whole earth. The “circle” of the earth refers to the heavens (Job 22:14) or to the horizon.
    3. ***Grasshoppers***: People are as weak as grasshoppers in their ability to prevail against God. The picture that comes to mind is of a powerful warrior being challenged by one grasshopper.
  1. ***He brings princes to nothing***: People in powerful positions of leadership, such as princes and judges, can easily intimidate those under them, but these powerful leaders are under God’s control. He can easily remove any leader or group of leaders such as the leadership of the Assyrian army in Isaiah’s day or the Antichrist and his top leaders in the end times.

*He went on, verse 23, “He brings the princes to nothing. He makes the judges useless.” See, King David in Psalm 2 said, “Woe, judges! Be warned O judges,” because the judges were the ones interpreting all the sentences and the penalties against the people. They were the ones who stood for the truth. So people were really afraid of the leaders of government and the judges. Those are the princes and the judges to whom the Lord says, “Are you kidding?”*

* + 1. ***Judges***: Those who interpret the laws and decide the penalties for breaking them. The Lord will make judges useless by reversing their laws and verdicts. David prophesied that kings and judges in the end time would resist Jesus and His Word and also those standing up for it (Ps. 2).

2The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers [judges] take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3“Let us break Their bonds [God’s Word] in pieces…” 10Therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. 11Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. (Ps. 2:2-11)

* + 1. ***Scarcely shall they be planted***: The Antichrist will plant his place or headquarters near Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45).

45And he [Antichrist] shall plant the tents of his palace [near Jerusalem] between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him. (Dan. 11:45)

24Scarcely 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. (Isa. 40:24)

*Look at verse 24. Read verse 24 through the lens of the Antichrist. Scarcely has his empire been planted, scarcely has he gotten started, and he took a little root. He made it for three-and-a-half years, and then the Lord went, “Whew!” He blew on him and he became nothing. He has three-and-a-half years, that is it.*

* + 1. ***Jesus will blow on them***: The Antichrist shall scarcely be established in power, then Jesus will blow on him, and his empire will wither—he will only rule for 3½ years (Isa. 11:4; 2 Thes. 2:8)

8And then the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thes. 2:8)

4He shall strike the earth…and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.   
(Isa. 11:4)

* 1. No force in the heavens can stop God’s plan (40:25-26). Jesus also has authority over the powers in the sky or the heavens (Acts 2:19-20). Jesus is more powerful than the heavenly forces that will seem to threaten the very existence of life on earth (Rev. 6:12-13; 8:12; 16:8-10, 21).

25“To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One. 26Lift 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…not one is missing. (Isa. 40:25-26)

*Verse 25, “To whom will you liken Me?” That is, “Who would you compare Me to? You are terrified of the enemy and the coalition and the kings and the judges. Compare Me to them, then, and if you get fearful, you get overwhelmed, and you lose your way”—which a lot of people will and that is understandable; we are human beings—“When that happens,” verse 26, “go outside and look at the sky at night. Look up and remember who your Lord and your Beloved and your Bridegroom King is. Remember who He is. See who created every one of the trillions of trillions and trillions of trillions of stars.”*

*The detail that He knows! Every single one He calls by name. Trillions and trillions, He has got a name for each. By naming them, He assigns them to their place in the galaxy. He knows their name, the nature of how they function, why He created them. Trillions, and He says that not one is missing. Do you think He is going to overlook you? He died for you, not the stars. He goes on, “Not one of them is missing.”*

* + 1. ***To whom will you liken Me***: In 40:25 Isaiah repeated the question that he asked in 40:18.
    2. ***Lift up your eyes***: After describing God’s power in 40:19-24, he exhorted them to look up at the stars. Isaiah exhorted those struggling with fear to look up and remember who God is.
    3. ***Stars***: He calls and directs the stars to the places that He assigns them. When Adam named the animals in Eden, this implied that he understood them and had power over them. The Lord “brings” the stars out by number; thus, they are clustered together by divine design.
    4. ***Not one is missing***: Since the Lord understands and directs trillions of trillions of stars,   
       then surely He can take care of His people who are so dear to Him. Since He has such detailed knowledge of the whole universe, we can be confident that He will not overlook the details in His people’s lives. Jesus made this same point when He said that God knows every hair on our head and every sparrow that falls to the ground (Mt. 10:28-31).

28And do not fear those who kill the body…fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. 30But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Mt. 10:28-31)

*Matthew 10, Jesus’ version of this passage is that God the Father knows every hair on your head and every sparrow that falls. He knows every single—[Mike pulls a hair out of his head]— there you go; the count just changed. It is easy for Him.*

1. Practical application: receiving strength (isa. 40:27-31)
   1. Isaiah teaches God’s people how to respond to the Lord (40:27-31). God’s people need not be afraid that God has forgotten them. Trusting His leadership is a foundational issue in the kingdom.

27Why do you say, O Jacob…“My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God”? 28Have 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.   
(Isa. 40:27-28)

*The application, verse 27, “Why do you say, O Jacob?” Jacob means Israel. Beloved Body of Christ, make it the Body of Christ as well as the remnant of Israel. “Why do you say, ‘My way is hidden. God does not see me’? He sees all the stars. He knows the whole story. Why do you keep thinking He does not see you? Why do you say, ‘My just claim has been passed over. God forgot me, He overlooked me again’? Why do you say this?”*

*Verse 28, He gives them the children’s church lesson: Have you not known? Did you not grow up with this teaching of the God who loves you? He is everlasting. He is the Lord, the covenant God. The Lord, the Creator, the powerful God, He doesn’t ever get tired. He doesn’t lose track of you. He does not lose the details of your life. He does not wear out because He is taking care of so many other people somewhere else. His understanding is unsearchable. It is so far beyond anything you could grasp, he said. You cannot even grasp what you do not grasp about how smart He is.*

*You know, it is the five-year-old wanting to understand the Houston-Space-Center mathematics. He says, “Well, I do math. Five plus five is ten. Give me something hard, like five times five, twenty-five. I am good at math. I am number one in my class.”*

*The guy at the Houston Space Center says, “Well, son, there is a whole lot you really do not know.”*

*“No, I am pretty good at math. I won the contest.”*

*He answers, “Well, no, I don’t know what to tell you right now.”*

*Take that, times a million, and that is the dilemma we have with understanding God. He would say, “There is so much you do not understand about what I understand about you.”*

* + 1. ***Jacob***: Jacob is another name from Israel because Jacob had twelve sons from whom came the twelve tribes of Israel. After the civil war in 933 BC., the ten tribes in the north formed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In 9:8-9, Isaiah referred to Israel by four different names— as *“Israel”* (Jacob’s covenant name), *“Jacob”* (the father of the twelve tribes), “*Ephraim”* (its largest tribe), and *“Samaria”* (capital city of Israel).
    2. ***My way is hidden***: Israel’s complaint was that their life was “hidden” from God because He seemed to allow injustice to continue. They felt overlooked by God in the pressures in their life and the crisis in their nation.
  1. The Lord gives strength to His people to the degree that they pursue it His way (40:29-31).

29He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. 30Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, 31but 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. (Isa. 40:29-31)

*Isaiah goes on, as it were, “I have good news,” verse 29, “for the people in the end times.” Again, this is also for all through history, but it is an end-time passage. They are weak. Jesus called it—Luke 21:26—“They are fainting from fear, overwhelmed.” He is talking to believers, absolutely terrified. They have no idea. The train is off the track. They do not even know where history is going. They do not know if the crisis has any redemptive purpose or if it even matters. Where is this really going? Is the Bible even true? I was taught none of this would ever happen. How could it? They are fainting with fear, and they are ready to give up.*

*He says, “No, no, no! I give strength to weak people. I get humans. I will give you strength. I will give you understanding that will strengthen you, and I will give you the presence of God manifested on you. I will strengthen you, even you.”*

*“No, I am so bad,” verse 30. “I am so weary, young men that utterly fail. I have sinned so badly. I didn’t just fail, I* ***utterly*** *failed as a believer.”*

*The Lord would say, “I got it. I know you better than you. I will give you strength. You have utterly caved in with fear, crisis, temptation, perversion, everything. You caved in,” He would go on, “but I will give you strength. I am not writing you off at all, never,” verse 31, “but you have to wait on Me.”—I have a little bit on that here—“You have to engage with Me. You have to get in the conversation with Me again. I will renew your strength.”*

* + 1. ***Faint and be weary***: Jesus spoke of people fainting with fear when observing the escalating pressures in the end times (Lk. 21:26). People who are overcome with fear often give up.

25And there will be signs in the sun…and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Lk. 21:25-26)

* + 1. ***Utterly fail***: Daniel saw an angel who swore an oath that the Great Tribulation would only last 3½ years, yet it would *completely shatter* the strength of the pride of Israel (Dan. 12:7).

7I heard the man [angel] clothed in linen…[he] swore…that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time [3½ years]; and when the power of the holy people [remnant of Israel]   
has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. (Dan. 12:7)

* + 1. Some believers make decisions that lead them to fail utterly. But their failure is not the last word as the Lord promised to show tender mercy and to strength any who will wait on Him.
  1. ***Wait on the Lord:*** To wait on God is to be preoccupied *engaging with Him* and His plan and narrative for our life*.* Christ-centered waiting includes active engagement and conversation with the Lord.

*To wait on the Lord is to be engaged, not just talking to Him about your heart, though for sure that, but number one about His heart and what is going on. “Tell me about Your leadership in the earth. Tell me about me and what is going on. Do I fit? Are things okay? Are things going right?” We wait on the Lord, and we engage with Him. We wait on the Lord by not drawing back in passivity, not being offended when it does not work out right.*

* + 1. We wait on God in two ways—by engaging with Him in prayer with faith and by not drawing back into passivity and offense when His promises are delayed. Waiting on God is not about “just biding time,” but is engaging actively with God in contending for His promises.
    2. ***Renew your strength***: The Lord promised to renew the strength of His people—their love, resolve, peace, courage, etc.
    3. ***To mount up with wings***: This speaks of being lifted up and empowering by the Spirit. This is in a way parallel to how an eagle interacts with the wind while flying to the heights.
    4. ***Run and not get weary***: In a believer’s life there are some seasons that require more intensity than others in “running” to God and with God and running from compromise (Rom. 6:13).
    5. ***Walk and not faith***: In a believer’s life that are some seasons that require more perseverance to “walk” with faithfulness in the midst of the routine and mundaneness of everyday life.
  1. ***Summary***: The message of comfort that prepares the way of the Lord includes God coming to Jerusalem (40:3), manifesting His glory worldwide (40:5), showing His strength in defending them (40:10) and His tender heart in caring for them (40:11). The message emphasizes her military conflicts ending, her sin being forgiven, and double honor being given to her in the Millennium (40:3). His end-time plans will display His perfect wisdom and power (40:12-17) that triumphs over all the hostile armies on earth (40:18-24) and imparts strength to prevail to all who wait on Him (40:27-31).

*So we will just end here. I want to read this to you. Here is the message of comfort. I am just going to read it. The message of comfort that prepares the way of the Lord—this is Isaiah 40. Here is the message: God is coming to Jerusalem. He is going to manifest His glory, and every human being will see it openly in the sky. He will show His strength and defend Jerusalem. With a strong arm He will intervene and wipe out the Antichrist. With a tender heart He will walk every single one of them back, feeding them, caring for them, gently leading them in His tenderness. Tell her that her military conflicts are over. Tell Jerusalem her sins are forgiven. Tell Jerusalem she will be given double honor in the Millennium.*

1. the Questions, exhortations, promises and declarations in Isaiah 40
   1. ***Questions***: The number of times that questions were asked by the Lord or the prophet in Isaiah 40 is noteworthy—15 times (v12, 13 [3x], 18 [2x], 21 [4x], 25 [2x], 27, v. 28 [2x same as v. 21]).
   2. ***Exhortations:*** There are 12 imperatives or exhortations to action— comfort (v. 1), cry out (40:2, 3, 6, 9), prepare the way (40:3), make straight a highway (40:3), get up on a mountain (40:9), lift up voice (40:9), say to the cities of Judah behold your God (40:9), look (40:15), lift eyes and see (40:26), wait on the Lord (40:31).
   3. ***Promises***: There are various promises that God gave to Israel in Isaiah 40 such as—her warfare is ended (40:2), her iniquity is pardoned (40:2), she has received double honor (40:2), every valley shall be exalted (40:5), every mountain shall be brought low (40:4), the crooked places shall be made straight (40:4), rough places made smooth (40:4), the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh (people) shall see it together (40:5), the word of the Lord stands forever (40:8), the Lord God shall come (40:10), He gives power to the weak (40:29), He increases strength (40:29), He shall renew their strength (40:31), those who wait on God shall mount up, run, and walk (40:31).
   4. ***Declarations***: The Lord and/or Isaiah made various declarations in Isaiah 40 such as—the voice of one crying in the wilderness (40:3), all flesh is grass (40:6-7), the nations are as a drop in the bucket or dust (40:15), He lifts up islands (40:15), Lebanon or its beasts are not sufficient to give glory due to God (40:16), all nations are less than nothing in their ability to challenge God (40:17), He sits above the circle of the earth (40:22), people are like grasshoppers (40:22), He stretches out the heavens (40:22), He brings princes and judges to nothing (40:23), He will blow on princes and judges and they will wither (40:24), He brings out the stars by number and name and not one of them is missing (40:26), the Lord never wearies (40:28), His understanding is unsearchable (40:28).

*God would say to them and to us, “Know, when the enemy rises up. that My end-time plans are perfect. I have great wisdom. No detail escapes Me. I can triumph over any nation. Tell them this, that no matter how much they failed or how afraid they are, I will give them strength to prevail. If they want to stand up and believe Me, I will give them another try, and I will strengthen them and forgive them.*

*Amen and amen! That is the Isaiah 40 messenger mandate.*

*Let’s do one of those “I love You” songs. Some people want to shout. I want to say, “I love You, Lord”*

*Let’s stand before the Lord. I love “I love You” songs. I love them. Let’s just adore the Lord for a few moments. Beloved, we are messengers. We are answering this call as a community. We are answering it. I mean we are not that great, but we are saying Yes together. We are moving forward intentionally.*