

THROUGH THE BIBLE

ISAIAH 40-43

The poet laureate of Great Britain and Ireland, Alfred Tennyson, once called the 40th chapter of Isaiah, "[One of the five great classics of the Old Testament record.](#)"

This chapter has had a powerful influence on the history of the Church... Isaiah 40 was said to be a favorite passage of Martin Luther... It also provided inspiration for the opening of Handel's Messiah.

Isaiah 40 is one of the great chapters in the Bible.

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah are full of woes. Isaiah prophesies judgment on the various nations of his day.

But in Chapter 40 the tone decidedly changes...

Hear 40:1, "[Comfort, yes, comfort My people!](#)" says your God." Judgment has ceased. Comfort has come.

Remember the Bible is divided into two sections. The first 39 books, or OT, speaks of *God's judgment*. The last 27 books, or the NT, is all about *God's salvation*.

This is why Isaiah is often called "[the mini Bible.](#)" For it's a book of 66 chapters. The first 39 portray [God as sovereign - He's on the throne - He judges the world.](#)

While the last 27 reveal that [God is savior - He's on a tree - suffering to save us.](#) These last 27 chapters are laced with *grace, salvation, blessing*. They show how broad and sweeping is the salvation of Christ. How it extends to the end of the age. It's fitting this second sections begins, "[Comfort, yes, comfort My people!](#)"

“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.” In the local, immediate context the Assyrian siege is past. Israel’s *“warfare is ended.”*

But we’ll discover these last 27 chapters speak not only of Israel’s *past*, but of *her future*. They foresee the end of the age when comfort will come to the Jews.

In Exodus 4:22 the Lord said, *“Israel is my son, my firstborn.”* And the firstborn son always received a double portion - either of blessing or cursing. But with that privilege also came greater responsibility.

And this has proven true with Israel. As God’s firstborn, no other nation has been so *lavishly blessed* or as *severely punished* as the Hebrews.

This last section of Isaiah looks beyond the Great Tribulation to a post-Armageddon world - when Israel’s *“warfare is ended.”* God’s people will embrace their Messiah, and *“her iniquity (or sin) will be pardoned.”*

Verse 3, *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”* In ancient times the king always had an advance man. The forerunner would arrive prior to the king’s visit to make the necessary preparations.

If a road was too steep and needed to be flattened, or too rough and had to be smoothed, it was up to the forerunner to make sure the king was well received.

And in relation to the coming of King Jesus, John the Baptist served as His forerunner. In fact, all four Gospels quote verse 1 and identify this “*voice crying in the wilderness*” as John. He was Messiah’s forerunner.

Yet rather than *smooth things out*, in a sense John *stirred things up*. He lived an austere life that mocked the materialism and ease of the Jewish leaders.

He exposed sin and preached repentance.

In anticipation of Jesus’ coming, John worked on the spiritual landscape. He prepared the people’s hearts.

Verse 6, “The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” Peter quotes this verse - 1 Peter 1:24-25. Human life is frail and transitory, but God’s Word endures - it’s eternal. This was John’s message.

Every time you gather grass clippings from your mower’s catch-bag - or throw out cut flowers that wilted after only a few days - remember the fragility of life.

You and I are here today and gone tomorrow.

“O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”

Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Again, this was John’s

message. *He exposed sin, then pointed to the Savior. “Behold, the Lord God shall come...”* John turned to Jesus and said, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

“His work (was) before Him.” John knew that Jesus’ greatest work, His atoning work, was before Him.

Verse 11, *“He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”*

In John 10:14 Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd.”*

That imagery isn’t as vivid or as meaningful to us as it was to the disciples. Every day they saw shepherds in action - how they ceaselessly nurtured their sheep.

And how the shepherd tends his flock, the Savior cares for His people. *His care is comprehensive.*

Isaiah mentions four ways Jesus tends His flock...

He **feeds**. He satisfies our spiritual hunger - our cravings for meaning and purpose and affection.

He **gathers**. He knows us by name and draws us together. When we stray, He’s quick to steer us home.

He **carries**. When we grow weak, or fall, Jesus promises to pick us up and carry us on His shoulders.

I’m sure you’ve read the poem, *“Footprints In The Sand.”* A man’s life is compared to a walk on the beach with Jesus. Their journey was marked by two pair of footprints. He and His Savior walking side-by-side.

But there was a stretch where only one set of prints were visible. The man asked the Lord, *“Where did you go? That was the time when I needed you most?”*

The Lord replied, *“That was when I carried you.”*

And then fourthly, the Shepherd **“gently leads”** His sheep. He treats us like pregnant lambs. A shepherd is gentle. He doesn't want to run the risk of miscarriage.

You could say, He handles us with *kid gloves!*

Inside a believer *the seed of God's Word* and *the life of God's Spirit* continue to grow. The Shepherd knows if protected and given time that believer will bear fruit.

But it doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. The Shepherd understands the process. He has patience.

Verse 12, **“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?”** In other words, who was the inspector when God built the universe? No one! God is accountable to no one! God holds the oceans in the palm of His hand.

“Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him?” Who advises God? No one. **“With 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?”** Who is God's teacher? No one!

Yet we've all tried at times to be God's counselor.

Foolishly, we've given God our counsel - made suggestions to Him for what He should or shouldn't do.

It reminds me of the man who wanted to serve God. He prayed, “Lord, please use me, especially in an advisory capacity.” Isaiah says God needs no counsel.”

Too often we forget God's grandeur and glory. Out of our pain we begin to question Him. We fall victim to a slow, subtle erosion of respect. That's when we need to refocus. *“With whom did He take counsel?”* No one!

Verse 15, *“Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing.”*

The power of God can shift the Earth's crust. He can make continents disappear or raise islands out of the sea. To God, nations are nothing - like dust on a scale.

Over my years of Bible study, one of my hobbies has been to keep a list of modern cliches' that originated in Scripture. Like verse 15, *“As a drop in a bucket.”*

Let me give you a few others... Job 19:20, *“skin of my teeth”* - Job 9:18, *“catch my breath”* - Jeremiah 5:3, *“harder than a rock”* - Isaiah 60:1, *“rise and shine”* - Ezekiel 8:7, *“hole in the wall”* - Numbers 31:53, *“every man for himself”* - Ecclesiastes 10:20, *“a little bird told me”* - Ezekiel 21:32, *“fuel to the fire”* - Deuteronomy 32:10, *“apple of His eye”* - Luke 7:45, *“kiss my feet.”*

Not sure what you do with that list... but there it is!

Verse 16, *“And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.”* Verse 16 should be read before every assembly of the United Nations!

It would certainly put us in a more humble posture.

“To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?” In light of God’s majesty, Isaiah now exposes the absurdity of mankind’s idolatry.

“The workman molds an image, the goldsmith overspreads it with gold, and the silversmith casts silver chains. Whoever is too impoverished for such a contribution chooses a tree that will not rot; he seeks for himself a skillful workman to prepare a carved image that will not totter.” Here’s the insanity of idolatry.

A rich man has an expensive idol, with gold overlay. A poor man’s idol is wood, carved from a tree. Imagine, worshipping a god no greater than your own means.

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.” Notice the language in verse 22.

Isaiah is writing 2200 years before Columbus sailed the ocean blue. He speaks of *“the circle of the earth.”*

Despite what the skeptics like to say [The Flat Earth](#) was never a biblical concept. The Bible is not only infallible in matters of faith and ethics, but it’s also accurate in its historical and scientific statements.

Here it says God sits above *“the circle of the earth...”*

It’s interesting to compare the Bible's cosmology with that of other ancient religions. The Egyptians said an egg in the primeval sea hatched a sun god - who had four sons and their sibling rivalry created the universe.

The ancient Greeks believed that the Earth was held up by the tireless arms of a giant named Atlas.

Hindus believed the Earth rested on the back of three elephants, who were standing on a giant tortoise, who was swimming in the cosmic sea. *Preposterous!*

Whereas the oldest book - the first Bible book written, Job 26:7 asserts, “God hangs the Earth on nothing.” Hows that for some sophisticated cosmology.

Remember Jesus spoke of the rapture in Luke 17.

Two women are grinding (a daytime activity), as two men are in a bed (a nighttime activity)... that’s when He’ll return. How could Jesus promise to return in the day and in the night, and not contradict Himself?

Obviously, He knew the Earth was round, not flat.

“He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. Scarcely shall they be planted, scarcely shall they be sown, scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, when He will also blow on them, and they will wither, and the whirlwind will take them away like stubble.”

“To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing.” Psalm 147:4 tells us, “He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.” Here God says look up and see the host of heaven - behold what He has created and named.

Astronomers say our galaxy contains 100 billion stars. There’re 100 million galaxies in known space. Known space is one-billionth of theoretical space.

Thus, if we take just our galaxy, the Milky Way, and set out to count the stars... If we counted one star per second, it'd take us 2500 years to count all the stars that are just in our galaxy. Yet God knows and names all the stars, in all the galaxies, all across the universe.

God's intellect is infinite. There's not a spec of dust in any remote corner of the universe that He doesn't know its history. *Yet men worship idols! It's insane!*

And modern man has the most ludicrous god of all.

He worships chance, randomness. Evolution suggests that the amazing, orderly universe we inhabit, all spun into existence by a string of accidents. At least the ancients believed in something, *not nothing*.

Verse 27, "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God"? Israel had accused God of being unfair - of even forsaking His people.

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is **unsearchable**." Often God doesn't tell us what He's up to, but that doesn't mean He's not up to something.

He's always vigilant! He never faints or gets weary. He has a plan even when we don't see its details.

Verse 29, "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall

mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” Human prowess diminishes. Our bodies are like a battery. They run down after a while.

Even a young man can grow faint and get weary.

But the Lord is like a wall outlet. Plug in to Him. He’s a continuous source of energy.

“*Wait on the Lord*” - the Hebrew word “*wait*” means “to connect, twist together.”

Get in sync with God and He’ll renew your strength. “We can soar with the eagles or run with the turkeys.”

Chapter 41, “Keep silence before Me, O coastlands, and let the people renew their strength! Let them come near, then let them speak; let us come near together for judgment.” In 40:27 Israel had accused God of letting them down. This sounds like the Jews today.

They claim God forsook them in the Spanish Inquisitions, in the Pogroms of Russia, in Hitler’s Holocaust. He ignored their prayers and their plight.

Yet here the Lord calls His people together. It’s time to sit down and settle this issue!... And here God’s words are more *anticipatory* than *historical*.

Isaiah is writing in the wake of Immanuel’s conquest.

But God is going to raise up Babylon to judge Judah for its sin. For 70 years the Jews will be taken captive to Babylon. It will feel like God has abandoned them.

They’ll need the assurances Isaiah brings here.

Verse 2, “Who raised up one from the east? Who in righteousness called him to His feet? Who gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings?”

Who gave them as the dust to his sword, as driven stubble to his bow? Who pursued them, and passed safely by the way that he had not gone with his feet?

Don't get confused here with Isaiah's use of the past tense. God is outside of the physical dimension we call time. When we say God is eternal we're not just saying He has lots of time, but that He exists outside of time.

Isaiah 57:15 speaks of God as "the high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity." From eternity past, God sees the end from the beginning. This is how He can write of future things as if they've already happened!

And here Isaiah is writing in the past about a scenario yet future. The Jews in Babylon are crying out "why has God forsaken us?" And God says He hasn't.

In fact, He'll raise up a deliverer, "one from the east!" This is the first mention of Cyrus, king of Persia.

We'll learn more about him in chapters 44-45. There Isaiah mentions him by name. He was the Persian King who conquered Babylon and set the Jews free.

His first decree financed their return to Jerusalem.

Yet here 170 years in advance Isaiah speaks to the Jews in Babylon, and assures them of a deliverer.

He's saying that even in Judah's darkest days, He never abandoned His people. *Punish and purify them? Yes!* But He already had a plan for their deliverance.

Verse 4, "Who has performed and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? 'I, the Lord, am the first; and with the last I am He.'" Who can predict the

future? Who is capable of writing history before the events even unfold? Only Yahweh - the great "*I am.*"

And here He's called "*the first and the last.*" God stands simultaneously at the dawn and twilight of time.

This statement about God is strategic. In Revelation 22:13 Jesus says, "*I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*" There's only one first and last. Thus, it means that if Yahweh and Jesus are first and last they are the same person.

Here's a great prooftext for the Deity of Jesus!

Verse 5, "*The coastlands saw it and feared, the ends of the earth were afraid; they drew near and came. Everyone helped his neighbor, and said to his brother, "Be of good courage!"* Everyone was encouraged when Cyrus the Persian took the throne.

"So the craftsman encouraged the goldsmith; he who smooths with the hammer inspired him who strikes the anvil, saying, "It is ready for the soldering"; then he fastened it with pegs, that it might not totter." In soldering Israel to Persia, God gave the Jews stability.

"But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend."

Here's an amazing title, God calls Abraham, "*My friend.*" *How would you like for God to refer to you as His friend?* Well, He has! In John 15:15 we learn that this is how Jesus sees you, and all of His disciples.

"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have

made known to you.” We need to be reminded that Jesus saved us not just to make us His servants, but His friends. He’s more interested in your friendship than He is your service. He saved you for fellowship!

Verse 9, “You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest regions, and said to you, ‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away...” Notice, God promises He’ll never cast the Jews away. He’ll keep who He’s chosen.

And this puts a death nail in what today’s theologians call “Replacement Theology” - the idea that God is through with Israel - that He’s taken all the promises He made to Israel and transferred them to the Church.

That’s a heretical doctrine, and contradicts verse 9!

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’

“Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish.

You shall seek them and not find them - those who contended with you. Those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing. For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’ This echoes God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2, “I will make you a great nation... I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you.” This may be the primary reason God has blessed the US - our support of Israel.

“Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you,” says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” God refers to His people as “*Jacob.*”

And Jacob was *a worm!* He was slippery, slimy - a double-crosser. He tried to steal the birthright from his older brother Esau. And throughout their history when the nation acted dishonestly they were being a “*Jacob.*”

Yet God changed Jacob’s name to “*Israel.*” Thus, when the nation acted humbly, they were an “*Israel.*”

Verse 15, “Behold, I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills like chaff. You shall winnow them, the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; you shall rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel.”

Israel will receive a winnowing fork that’ll spread out mountains, and toss high the hills. Israel will be mighty.

“The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine and the box tree together...” All these trees are foreign to the area. They’ll be transplanted.

“That they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.”

God will turn the wilderness into a forest. He'll show the nation Israel that He has not forsaken them!

Verse 21, “Present your case,” says the Lord. “Bring forth your strong reasons,” says the King of Jacob.”

God has made His case. He's proven why He hasn't forsaken Israel. Now He challenges their idols to present their case for how God has been unfaithful...

“Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and see it together.” Yahweh is calling for the idols of the people to forecast the future, *like He did...*

“Indeed you are nothing, and your work is nothing; he who chooses you is an abomination.” These idols are impotent, for they're nothing. Just sticks and stone. And the person who follows an idol is despicable.

“I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come; from the rising of the sun he shall call on My name; and he shall come against princes as though mortar, as the potter treads clay.” Cyrus will come from the east, but this Deliverer comes from the north!

It harkens me back to Psalm 75:6, “Exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is judge: He puts down one, and exalts

another.” Promotion comes not from east, west, or south, but from God. A few of us southerners will hate this, but the inference is that God occupies the north.

Isaiah 14:13 places God’s throne “on the farthest sides of the north.” Leviticus 1:11 tells us the burnt offering was sacrificed on the north side of the altar, “before the LORD.” God’s dwelling in the north.

So, Who is this Deliverer from the north?

“Who has declared from the beginning, that we may know? And former times, that we may say, ‘He is righteous’? Who is from the start? Who is righteous?

“Surely there is no one who shows, surely there is no one who declares, surely there is no one who hears your words.” The first time I said to Zion, ‘Look, there they are!’ And I will give to Jerusalem one who brings good tidings.” **The Deliverer from the north is Jesus.**

He came the first time bringing “good tidings,” good news, but people didn’t listen. No one heard His words.

Verse 28, “For I looked, and there was no man; I looked among them, but there was no counselor, Who, when I asked of them, could answer a word.

Indeed they are all worthless; their works are nothing; their molded images are wind and confusion.”

Jesus came the first time bringing “good tidings,” but no one heard. Folks were too busy pursuing worthless things. *And the same mistake is being made today.*

Chapter 42, “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.” To

this point in Isaiah the phrase *“My servant”* has been a reference to the nation of Israel.

But here the Servant of Yahweh is identified by a personal pronoun. *“I have put My Spirit upon Him.”*

From this point forward we'll learn more and more about Yahweh's Servant. Until the prophecy crescendoes in chapter 53 - there Isaiah will give us a description of the Suffering Servant dying on the cross.

He'll describe the crucifixion of Jesus with such detail you'd think you were reading an eyewitness account of the actual events, not a 700 year old prophecy.

Verse 2, *“He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.”* And this was the Jesus style. He wasn't loud or boisterous. John was *“the voice crying in the wilderness”* - not Jesus.

Jesus impressed folks not with *His volume*, but with *His content*. With what He said, not with how He said it.

Verse 3, *“A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.”* In Matthew 12 this verse is quoted of Jesus. Here's His approach to the weak and wounded.

If you're a bruised reed... If you're crippled and weak... If you're once tall stalk now droops over...

If you're a smoking flax... If you feel like the dying embers of a once roaring fire... If you're exhausted...

Jesus wants to be to you a **splint** and **flint**.

Stake your life to His, and His strength props up the little strength you have left. Ask and He'll fan the dying flames. He'll rekindles passion... for life... for ministry... for marriage... Rather than punish us for growing weak or turning cold... He breathes new life in tired people!

He revives the love and hope that almost died out.

Remember, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He treats His flock with *Kid Gloves!* And if we're like Jesus we should treat people the way Jesus treats us.

Verse 4, "He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law." This is a prophetic of Jesus. He will not fail. We might get discouraged, but not Jesus!

Verse 5, "Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it: "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house."

Again, this is all prophetic of Jesus. He's the author of a new covenant. A light to the Gentiles. He'll open blind eyes and bring out prisoners who sit in darkness.

Verse 8, "I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images." God shares His glory with no one!

Here's a verse that's a proof text for the Deity of Jesus. In John 17:5 Jesus prayed, "O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You

before the world was." Notice, if Jesus shares glory with the Father, but God shares His glory with no man, then either the Bible contradicts itself, or Jesus and the Father must be one. And I believe the latter!

Verse 9, Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." Never scoff at Bible prophecy. God delights in telling His people things before they occur.

"Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you coastlands and you inhabitants of them! Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare His praise in the coastlands." From *coast to wilderness* let everyone give God glory and declare His praise.

Verse 13, The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies." We identify with Jesus as a Shepherd, as a light to the Gentiles, as an opener of eyes and prisons.

But here the same Lord who "gently leads" us - Who treats us with *kid gloves* - Who "will not cry out, nor raise His voice" comes as a "*man of war... (to) prevail against His enemies... (He returns with a) loud shout...*"

This is Jesus when He comes a second time.

"I have held My peace a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself." Over the centuries God would've been just in judging His people, but He held His peace, and showed restraint, and stood still, *but...*

"Now I will cry like a woman in labor, I will pant and at once. I will lay waste the mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will make the rivers coastlands, and I will dry up the pools. I 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. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them." God will judge Israel, but will take care of the blind and needy.

"They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, who trust in carved images, who say to the molded images, 'you are our gods.' "Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant (Israel was God's blind servant), or deaf as My messenger whom I send? (Israel was suppose to be God's messenger, but they were deaf to His words.)

"Who is blind as he who is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? Seeing many things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear." God was stuck with a blind messenger. Despite her privileges Israel couldn't see or hear God's Word. So God had to send another messenger, His Son, Jesus!

As verse 6 says, He'll be "a light to the Gentiles."

Verse 21, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will exalt the law and make it honorable. But this is a people robbed and plundered; all of them are snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison houses; they are for prey, and no one delivers; for plunder, and no one says, "Restore!"

Who among you will give ear to this? Who will listen and hear for the time to come?" Isaiah's warning here is "*for the time to come...*" - it's for a future generation - especially the Jews who return from exile in Babylon.

Verse 24, "Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways, nor were they obedient to His law. Therefore He has poured on him the fury of His anger and the strength of battle; it has set him on fire all around, yet he did not know; and it burned him, yet he did not take it to heart." God will finally judge His people. "*He held His peace for a long time,*" but His patience isn't forever. Judgment will come.

Chapter 43, "But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine." Israel had always belong to God.

And He would never abandon them. *Judge?* Yes! But *forsake?* No! Even though at time it may've looked like it.

He promises, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place." These promises have comforted God's people whenever we've gone through *fires, floods, rivers* - any trying situation. Whatever you're forced to "*pass through*" you won't be alone - God will *pass through it* with you!

Even the fire! This was literally fulfilled in Babylon for the three Hebrews thrown in the king's fiery furnace.

Some of us come on Sundays, and like a sponge we soak up the Word. But sponges inevitably get squeezed. When you're squeezed what comes out - *faith* or *fear*?

Verse 4, **Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored, and I have loved you; therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life.**

Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth..."

This prophecy was partially fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylon, but at that time they came only from the east. Here they return from all four corners of the globe. Isaiah wrote this prophecy 2700 years ago, and our generation has been privileged to see it fulfilled.

After WW2 and the Holocaust, European Jews flock to Israel... After Israel's independence in 1948, Jews from the east, Arab nations, joined in returning to their land.

In the early 1980s Jews from Ethiopia and Russia also returned to the land promised by their forefathers.

Jews have come home from west, east, north, south.

Today, the population of Jews in Israel has eclipsed six million. We've this verse unfold before our very eyes.

Verse 7, **"Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." Bring out the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the**

people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear and say, "It is truth." God declares His superiority by foretelling the future. This is why prophecy is important.

"You are My witnesses," says the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me."

God has always been, and God will always be.

Verse 11, "I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior." Here's another proof-text for the Deity of Jesus. Throughout the NT Jesus is the Savior - yet Yahweh says He is the only Savior. Again, either the Bible contradicts itself or Jesus and the Father are one!

"I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; therefore you are My witnesses," says the Lord, "that I am God.

Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?" "*Before the day was*" or "*before time began*" there was God. The true God dwells outside of time.

Verse 14, "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "For your sake I will send to Babylon, and bring them all down as fugitives - the Chaldeans, who rejoice in their ships. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters, Who brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power (they shall lie down together,

they shall not rise; they are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick):" God will destroy Babylon - extinguish it's flame - and give His people a new start!

"Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

Webster defines the word "serendipity" as *"the faculty of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for."*

As you walk with God you discover that the works of God have a serendipitous quality - you never know what's going to happen next. God is a God of surprises

I like TLB translation of verse 18, "But forget all that - it is nothing compared to what I'm going to do! For I'm going to do a brand new thing." And God often does!

Once I picked up the phone and heard ringing on other end. A lady answered "Hello," I said "Hello."

Neither of us were trying to call each other, yet we connected. I apologized for the inconvenience, hung up, then I picked back up the receiver expecting to get a dial tone. Instead the same lady was on the phone.

Again I apologized. She suggested she would hang up first. But again, when I picked up there she was.

Finally, I said, "Mam, I know why this is happening, the Lord wants me to speak to you." So I spent the next few minutes sharing the Gospel with this lady.

The next time I picked up the phone I got a dial tone!

Obviously, God wanted me to talk to that lady. And that's just one of the many serendipitous twists I've had as a Christian. Following Jesus spices up your life.

Verse 20, "The beast of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise." God will provide for the returning exiles even as they come to Jerusalem.

"But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; and you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, nor wearied you with incense." "Where's the beef?" In the OT sin required a sacrifice. The people had neglected their offerings.

"You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities." God wanted the sacrifices not for the aroma. It was their repentance that pleased Him.

"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins." Note, God forgives them for "*My own sake.*" Certainly, He forgives us because He loves us, but that's not His only motivation. He also forgives us to showcase His grace... to bring Himself glory... to demonstrate His wisdom...

"Put Me in remembrance; let us contend together; state your case, that you may be acquitted." If they confess their sin God will forgive them. "Your first father sinned, and your mediators have transgressed against Me." God didn't forgive them on account of Abraham, or the various priests who served - but by His grace!

Verse 28, "Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches." The *"the princes of the sanctuary"* were the priests. God plans to curse, or declare the priests *"profane"* or *"unclean"* - and start over with a new priest.

Read the NT book of Hebrews, and you'll learn Jesus is a better priest than *"the princes of the OT sanctuary."*