

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION**

- Isaiah 1-39 = Isaiah's message to Judah in her present situation during Isaiah's ministry → overarching message of judgment, with glimmers of grace and hope
- Isaiah 40-66 = Isaiah's message to Judah as if the Babylonian Captivity were already a reality, with a focus on what lies ahead for the nation → overarching message of grace and hope, with glimpses of judgment

**PRAYER****INTRODUCTION**

- Pictures of greatness...
- **Illustration:** April 23, 2010 → Mount Eyjafjallajökull (Eye-jaf-jollah-jocul) in Iceland blew its top creating a massive volcanic eruption (seen from the International Space Station; 5 miles into the air). It closed down the airspace south of Iceland, leaving Europe entirely grounded for 5 days (7 million grounded; 65,000 flights cancelled; \$20 billion lost due to flights grounded)—this was the largest air travel disruption since WWII.
- **Illustration:** Strong Man Competitions (1. Carry & Drag [Anvil, Anchor, Chain, etc.]; 2. Giant Log Lift; 3. Pulling or Lifting Up Pillars; 4. Truck or Plane Pull; 5. Dead Lift or Squat Lift Barrels; 6. Atlas Stones)

**1. INSTRUCTION TO THE PROPHETS (VV. 1-4)**

- The must provide a message of comfort to Israel (vv. 2-3). They have paid for their sins (NOTE: We will never need to pay "double for their sins."), and now they would be restored.
- The content of the message of comfort was that "God is coming!" (vv. 3-8). God was offering comfort to His people, promising an end to her iniquity and its consequences ("warfare").
  - As part of this comfort, Israel is told of the coming of Yahweh to her midst (vv. 3-5). A voice is crying (in essence), "Yahweh is coming! So, let's fix up the highway so that He has easy access into our midst."
  - Many Israelites were probably wondering if having God come to their midst was a good thing, seeing as they were currently experiencing that very God's judgment upon their disobedience and rebellion. "Will He not be coming to judge us again?" they wonder.
  - To help assure ("comfort") them of God's desire to deal graciously with them, Isaiah proclaims, "Behold your God" (v. 9) and launches into one of the grandest pictures of the majesty (vv. 10-28) and grace (vv. 29-31) of Yahweh. The comforting reality, then, is that after the purging of judgment, God will again return to His people in the fullness of His glory and grace to dwell with them!

**2. DESCRIPTION OF GOD [I.E., HIS GREATNESS] (VV. 5-31)****A. God's greatness is seen in His rule (vv. 10-11).**

- He rules with authority (v. 10).
- He rules with tenderness (v. 11).
- **Application:** What are you "earning"?

**B. God's greatness is seen in His bigness (v. 12)**

- Holds all streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, seas, oceans, etc. in His palm.
- The universe fits in His 9 inches.
- All the dust, dirt, mud, rocks, etc. fits in His measuring cup.
- Mt. Everest and all the rest fit snugly in His scales.
- Emphasis here on His creative power and genius, too.
- **Application:** We are tiny and so insignificant. What compels us to fight against God? What compels us to trust in ourselves?

**C. God's greatness is seen in His omniscience (vv. 13-14, 27).**

- He needs no counselor; He doesn't use a advisory cabinet (13-14).
  - **Application:** Stop offering Him input; stop worrying; stop doubting; stop despairing. Start taking His advice; start trusting.
- He intimately knows you (27).
  - **Application:** Stop complaining; start praying.

**D. God's greatness is seen in His incomparableness (vv. 15-20).**

- The nations do not compare to Him (15, 17).
  - Like a bit of overflow from a bucket.
  - Like a speck of dust on a scale.
  - Like fine dust.
  - Like nothing.
  - Like less than nothing.
  - Like meaningless.
  - **Application:** Trust not in men or nations
- There is not enough to worship Him with (16).
- *Rhetorical Question #1 (18)*
- No idol will ever resemble Him, because they are all manmade—from the expensive ones to the cheap ones (19-20)
  - **Application:** Trust not in God-fillers.

**E. God's greatness is seen in His creative power (vv. 21-22, 26).**

- *Rhetorical Question #2 (21)*
- God is transcendent.
- The earth's inhabitants are like grasshoppers.
- He made the heavens like we make a bed or set up a tent.
- He individually created each star, calling them all by a name and losing none.
- This is because He is "great in His might and strong in His power."
- **Application:** If He brought us into this world, He can take us out.

**F. God's greatness is seen in His omnipotence (vv. 23-25, 28)**

- He is King of all kings, Lord of all lords.
- He reduces proud rulers to nothing.
- He makes the "movers" and "shakers" of this world meaningless.
- Before they take root to flourish, He can easily overturn them
- *Rhetorical Questions #3 (25)*
- SUMMARY STATEMENT = v. 28

**G. God's greatness is seen in His grace (vv 29-31).**

- He Himself has a limitless supply of strength.
- He appropriately gives strength to the ones who recognize their need for it—the humble.
- Physical strength means nothing, compared to the nature of the strength that God gives.
- For those who "wait" upon the Lord (the remnant...this denotes hope, humility, and faith), God will give them new strength which will never be exhausted.
- **Application:** Are you weak and unable? Stop relying upon yourself to get you by, make you better, etc.

**3. SO WHAT? WE RETURN TO V. 3.**

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*What it meant:*

- This vision of God was not meant to terrify Israel. It wasn't meant to convict them of the judgment of God. It was meant to comfort them. Thus, there would be a voice proclaiming this message of comfort...that God was coming to their midst!
- This proclaimed vision of God was meant to motivate them to clear the highway so that God would easily enter their presence.
  - In our New Testament passages, we discover that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of the "voice" that would call upon Israel to prepare for the coming of Yahweh into their midst.
  - However, nowhere do we read of him actually proclaiming, "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). Instead, his recorded message is, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).
  - What we learn, then, is that the primary purpose of this "voice" was not to motivate Israel to build a new highway so that God wouldn't have an accident on His way into Jerusalem, but rather to compel them to clean up the pathway to their hearts, because their Messiah was coming to dwell in them. This "preparation" was less of a physical and national preparation, and more of a spiritual and personal preparation. This is the most comforting message that God could have given His people—He was coming to them, not in the nationalistic sense in which He had been with them before (in which, at times, He was treated merely as a good luck charm), but in the Messianic sense in which He would relate to each one personally and spiritually (as a Savior from sin and death).

### *What it means:*

- This same message, then, is for us, as well. We must “prepare” ourselves for the coming of God’s promised Savior who wants to dwell in us personally and spiritually through regeneration. The “kingdom of heaven is at hand”; indeed, Jesus desires for the kingdom to be “in [our] midst” (Luke 17:21)! Let us “prepare” the way for His ease of access.
- According to John, this is done through “repentance.” John majors on repentance in his ministry.
  - Repentance begins with a confession of sin (Matthew 3:2, 6; Mark 1:4, 5; Luke 3:3). “God in our midst” (i.e., fellowship with God) occurs as sin is confessed and turned from (i.e., the fundamental meaning of repentance is “to turn”).
  - Scripture indicates that to have ongoing fellowship with God, confession needs to happen both once and regularly.
    - On the one hand, we must demonstrate a single act of confession in which we consider our sin in the same way God does (i.e., the fundamental meaning of confession is “to say the same thing about”) and turn from it as a way of life toward God Himself as our way of life. This is the instrument through which we are “born again” by grace into an everlasting relationship with God, no longer as our Judge, but now as our Father. This is the confession that John has in view here (cf. Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3, 6).
    - On the other hand, the highway often falls into disrepair, even within God’s children; and that eternal fellowship is strained and hindered through continued engaging in sin. So, believers are compelled to regularly “confess our sins” (I John 1:9; 2:1) in order to experience unhindered fellowship with the Father.
- What an incredible reality that the Creator would desire to have a relationship with His rebellious creation at all! In Christ, we discover the Creator acting upon that desire, entering our midst so that He might bring us to Himself, not only physically and temporarily (as during the life of Jesus), but also spiritually and eternally for all who will “prepare” through confession. What inexhaustible comfort!

### **CONCLUSION**

- **Application:** The great God that is described in Isaiah 40 isn’t written of to terrify us, but to overwhelm us with the truth that that very God wants to dwell within us. He wants to be our God, and He wants us to be His children. He wants to dwell in our midst, yes within our very beings; but He doesn’t want to be grieved living there...He wants to powerfully display His presence (i.e., His gracious continual work in our lives). We must practice repentance: (1) the one-time turning from a life of sin to a walk with God, and the (2) daily making choices to turn from our sin and toward this great God.