

## Isaiah 40A

- Today we begin “Second Isaiah”
  - Chapters 40-66 present a very different pattern when compared to the first 39 books of the Bible
  - Second Isaiah is written about events in the future from Isaiah’s day
    - But he will often speak as if they are present day or even history
    - It will be as if Isaiah has been transported into the future and writes from that perspective
    - We said that this division is reminiscent of the way the Bible is divided into the Old and New Testaments
  - There are several ways we can describe the differences
    - I will list them tonight and then reflect upon them as we move through the chapters

First Isaiah 1-39	Second Isaiah 40-66
God’s instrument is Assyria	God’s instrument is Babylon
Focuses on judgment	Focus is deliverance
Includes history	No history; always forward looking
Messiah is ruling to conquer sin	Messiah is a healing servant
Isaiah’s own life is interwoven	Isaiah’s own life is absent

- Another way to divide Second Isaiah is into thirds
  - The first third runs from Chapters 40-48
    - It focuses on the greatness of God the Father
  - The second third in Chapters 49-57
    - Focuses on the Son, as the suffering servant to redeem Israel from Her sins

- The third section is Chapters 58-66 looks at the Spirit
  - Looking at the remnant of Israel and how the Spirit produces the glory of Israel when the Spirit is poured out on Israel
- We could also contrast First Isaiah and Second Isaiah in simple terms
  - First Isaiah focuses on the judgment sin requires under terms of the Law
  - While Second Isaiah emphasizes the grace of God made possible through a Messiah's sacrifice
    - Law vs. Grace
- Looking at Isaiah 40, we are given yet another way to outline the second half of Isaiah
  - And this outline comes in the opening verses of chapter 40

[Is. 40:1](#) " Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.

[Is. 40:2](#) " Speak kindly to Jerusalem;

And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,  
That her iniquity has been removed,  
That she has received of the LORD'S hand  
Double for all her sins."

- The Lord's opening words in verse 1 are spoken to the prophets themselves
  - Certainly Isaiah, but probably his contemporary Micah as well
  - After 39 chapters of woes and judgments and prophecies of calamity, now they are told to present comforting words
- The sense of this statement in Hebrew (and the one that follows in verse2) suggest a winning over of the people
  - "Speak to their hearts" is the sense of the phrase
    - Give them encouraging words to win them back to God
- This is similar to what God tells Israel in other prophets, including Hosea

[Hos. 2:13](#) "I will punish her for the days of the Baals

When she used to offer sacrifices to them  
And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry,  
And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the LORD.

[Hos. 2:14](#) ¶ “Therefore, behold, I will allure her,  
Bring her into the wilderness  
And speak kindly to her.

[Hos. 2:15](#) “Then I will give her her vineyards from there,  
And the valley of Achor as a door of hope.  
And she will sing there as in the days of her youth,  
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

[Hos. 2:16](#) “It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD,  
“That you will call Me Ishi  
And will no longer call Me Baali.

- Hosea says that at first God punishes Israel for following Baal
  - Acting as a harlot with false gods
- But then in v.14 God will allure her back and speak kindly to her
  - The Hebrew for “speak kindly” is the same sense as Isaiah 40:1-2
  - Win her back
- And the result of that winning back will be a new day for Israel
  - In that day they will call God “Ish” or husband
  - And they will no longer look to Baal as god
- At this point, I need to introduce another of Isaiah’s trademark weaving of two themes together
  - In Second Isaiah, we will see Babylon at the center of many prophecies
    - And we know from history there was a Babylon that existed about 120 years after Isaiah
      - This was Nebuchannezar’s Babylon
    - But there is also to be a future Babylon during Tribulation
      - The Antichrist’s Babylon
    - Both Babylon’s are important to Israel, and Isaiah weaves together references to both throughout Second Isaiah
  - Just like with Assyria, the Babylon of Isaiah’s near future becomes a picture of the Babylon of the Tribulation

- The time of captivity due to arrive from Babylon gives way to a new exodus into the promised land at the hands of a deliverer
- And a new better nation emerges
- In 40:2 we are given an outline for Second Isaiah
  - Isaiah must speak kindly to Israel concerning three things
    - Her warfare as ended
    - Her iniquity has been removed
    - She has received double for all her sins from the Lord
  - Let's look at each of these in detail so we can begin to follow Isaiah's pattern
- First, Isaiah says Israel's warfare has ended
  - The war Isaiah is referring to is the war between Israel and God Himself
    - This was the war that began as a result of Israel's sin and disobedience of the covenant
  - God fought His battles through the hands of Israel's adversaries, principally Assyria
    - Remember His words to Jerusalem (Ariel) earlier:

[Is. 29:2](#) I will bring distress to Ariel,  
And she will be a city of lamenting and mourning;  
And she will be like an Ariel to me.

[Is. 29:3](#) I will camp against you encircling you,  
And I will set siegeworks against you,  
And I will raise up battle towers against you.

- This warfare is ended (speaking about a future time)
  - In chapters 40-48, Isaiah describes why the war has ended
    - The section focuses on God's superiority over the idols that provoked the war in the first place
    - Contrasting Israel with Gentiles who follow idols
    - And God promises the end of the gods of Babylon

- Isaiah gives a promise of two deliverances from these gods:
    - One from the idols worship that send Israel into the first Babylonian captivity
    - And the second one from the gods of the Spiritual Babylon
      - But both Babylons represent the end of warfare in slightly different ways
        - In 40-48 Isaiah will describe how God puts an end to His warfare when the nation is restored under Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah
        - And
          - After this return to the Land, Israel never again pursued idolatry
        - The first Babylon experience then becomes a picture of how Israel's faithfulness is restored (in the fullest sense) after the second Babylon
- Part 2 will describe how Israel's iniquity has been removed (or literally made amends)
  - In a sense, part 2 explains part 1
    - The war ended because Israel has ceased to follow idols
    - And God has removed ungodliness from Jacob
  - This section runs from chapters 49-57 and focuses on the suffering Messiah
    - The suffering is an atonement made by the Messiah to pay the debt of Israel's sins
  - Also in this section, the suffering Messiah is contrasted with the Messiah's glory in His kingdom
    - This contrast has long caused trouble for rabbis, who decided Isaiah must be teaching that there would be two Messiahs
      - A suffering Messiah and a conquering Messiah
    - You see this confusion in the questioning directed at John the Baptist

[John 1:19](#) ¶ This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

[John 1:20](#) And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

[John 1:21](#) They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

- They ask him if he is the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet
  - The Christ is the conquering Messiah
  - Elijah is to return before the establishment of the kingdom
  - The Prophet is the suffering Messiah
- Finally, the third section to Second Isaiah is found in chapters 49-57
  - This section addresses Israel receiving double for her sins
    - Like before, this third section is explained in a sense by the second section
    - Israel received a pardoning through the suffering Messiah only after she had been made to "pay" double for her sins
  - To explain this, let's remember why Israel found herself under judgment in the beginning of Isaiah
    - She had broken the covenant of Moses
      - Israel agreed to keep it's terms and when she didn't she fell under it's curses
    - The requirements of the Law includes the principle that the first born must receive a double portion of the inheritance
      - From this principle of a double portion, God declares that Israel would have to suffer double for breaking the covenant
      - But then when Israel is restored, it would receive double in her glory, as the chief nation on the Earth
- God calls Israel His first born among the nations in Exodus 4:22
  - You can see God echoing Isaiah in other places

[Jer. 16:18](#) "I will first doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations."

- Likewise, they receive a double restoration

[Zech. 9:11](#) ¶ As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you, I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

[Zech. 9:12](#) Return to the stronghold, O prisoners who have the hope; This very day I am declaring that I will restore double to you.

- Finally, Paul repeats this principle in Romans

[Rom. 2:9](#) There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

[Rom. 2:10](#) but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

- The Jews are always first, both in judgment and in restoration
  - And they receive a double portion for their sins
  - Ultimately, the double portion that Israel receives for her sins is paid out in Tribulation
  - While the double portion of glory is realized in Israel's position in the Kingdom as chief nation
- One last observation
  - Each of these sections is divided from the next with an interesting statement
    - A statement about the wicked
    - 48:22, 57:21, and 66:24
  - Do you remember how in the gospel of Matthew Jesus would often teach parables about Israel or the church
    - Which He then ended with a single quote about the wicked?
    - This is a classic Biblical pattern

- Before we get into the first section concerning the end of warfare begin, Isaiah shows a series of calls that take place in response to God's direction from vs. 1-2
  - The first call is found in verses 3-5

[Is. 40:3](#) ¶ A voice is calling,  
 "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;  
 Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

[Is. 40:4](#) "Let every valley be lifted up,  
 And every mountain and hill be made low;  
 And let the rough ground become a plain,  
 And the rugged terrain a broad valley;

[Is. 40:5](#) Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
 And all flesh will see it together;  
 For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

- A voice calls to prepare a way for a special arrival
  - The description of preparations here is based on the culture of Isaiah's day
    - As a king might enter into a new region as a visitor or to take up residence in a new part of his land, the people would prepare by cutting a new road or cleaning up the old one
      - They made a smooth road for the visiting king
      - They made his entry easier
    - That's the sense of how one voice says to prepare for the arrival of Christ, the King
  - Only this King will see valleys and mountains changed
    - As we've seen over and over again, there are two events mixing together here
- We know from all four gospel writers that John the Baptist was related to this verse,
  - But it's clear from the text in Isaiah that John wasn't the complete fulfillment of this prophecy
    - The glory of the King wasn't revealed
    - And not all flesh saw that glory
    - And mountains and valleys weren't reconstructed at that time

- But consider this passage from Matt

[Matt. 17:9](#) ¶ As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

[Matt. 17:10](#) And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

[Matt. 17:11](#) And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; [Matt. 17:12](#) but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

[Matt. 17:13](#) Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

- When the disciples see Jesus' glory, they begin to remember that Elijah was supposed to return before Christ's return
  - It comes from Malachi 4, the last chapter of the OT

[Mal. 4:5](#) ¶ "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

- The great and terrible day of the Lord is a reference to Tribulation
  - So this is a prophecy regarding Christ's second coming
- Furthermore, John the Baptist himself said he wasn't Elijah
  - We read those verses earlier
- So the disciples ask Jesus about that teaching...where was Elijah?
  - In v.11 Jesus says that Elijah is in fact going to come
    - When Jesus spoke those words, John the Baptist was already dead
    - So obviously He meant the true Elijah would come in a future day
    - Prior to Jesus' second coming
  - But Jesus also said that Isaiah's words were spoken about John
    - We must understand then that John was a type of Elijah
      - A lesser example in a sense

- Just as Jesus' first coming is a lesser arrival than His eventual second coming which is a greater glory
  - That's what Isaiah 40:5 is describing
    - The glory of the Lord seen by everyone is the glory of His second coming

[Matt. 24:29](#) ¶ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

[Matt. 24:30](#) "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

- So the first part of chapter 40 shows how one aspect of the call God requires in verse 2 takes place
  - God says in v.2 to "call out to Israel"
    - So in vs.3-5 the first call is explained
    - A call of encouragement will be made to Israel by John the Baptist prior to Jesus' first coming
      - But this call is merely a picture, because it doesn't result in Israel hearing
    - A second, effectual call will be made by Elijah to Israel before Jesus' second coming
      - Elijah's call will be made before the judgments of Tribulation
      - And will lead to Israel's restoration in the end
- Then a second call goes out with a pessimistic perspective

[Is. 40:6](#) A voice says, "Call out."

Then he answered, "What shall I call out?"

All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

[Is. 40:7](#) The grass withers, the flower fades,

When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;

Surely the people are grass.

[Is. 40:8](#) The grass withers, the flower fades,

But the word of our God stands forever.

- God's command to call out is repeated in verse 6, but then another voice answers
  - What should I call out?
    - The call is to declare that the flesh is temporary and passing
    - When God's Spirit (or breath) blows, the grass withers
  - To fully understand how this fits, we need to look at 1Peter where this verse is quoted

[1Pet. 1:22](#) ¶ Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,  
[1Pet. 1:23](#) for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

1Pet. 1:24 For,

“ ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,  
 AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.  
 THE GRASS WITHERS,  
 AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,

[1Pet. 1:25](#) BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

And this is the word which was preached to you.

- Peter says that our obedience to the truth came from being born again from a new seed
  - This new seed is not like the perishable seed we were born from the first time
    - The fleshly seed which is like grass and withers and dies eventually
  - We were born of an immortal seed
    - God's word, which is Christ living in us
  - Who was the word preached to us as the Gospel
- So the first call to Israel was from the voices of John the Baptist and Elijah calling upon Israel to repent and receive the Messiah
  - The second call is from the Word of God, Christ Himself who proclaimed Himself to the nation upon His first coming
  - Now the third call is described...

[Is. 40:9](#) ¶ Get yourself up on a high mountain,  
 O Zion, bearer of good news,  
 Lift up your voice mightily,  
 O Jerusalem, bearer of good news;  
 Lift it up, do not fear.  
 Say to the cities of Judah,  
 "Here is your God!"

[Is. 40:10](#) Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might,  
 With His arm ruling for Him.  
 Behold, His reward is with Him  
 And His recompense before Him.

[Is. 40:11](#) Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,  
 In His arm He will gather the lambs  
 And carry them in His bosom;  
 He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

- The final call is to be one of good news
  - The word for good news is the Hebrew word for gospel
  - This voice comes from Zion, from Jerusalem
    - And it declares to the cities of Judah, Here is your God!
  - This call describes the Lord as one coming with might to rule
    - And His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him
      - The reward with Him is His Bride
    - The recompense is His work or wages are before Him
      - The Kingdom is before Him, His payment from the Father
  - V.10 describes Jesus' relationship to the Gentiles
    - Ruling over these nations, with His Gentile Bride
  - Then in verse 11 Jesus is described as the Shepherd for Israel, His flock
    - He gathers His lambs and gently leads them
    - All Jews are regenerated, so He doesn't rule over them
- The final call then is the call into faith that comes to the Jews in Jerusalem as the Spirit is poured out
  - This three part call also mirrors the three part division of Second Isaiah

- The first call is focused on God the Father
  - Announcing His Son by preparing men for His arrival
  - Announcing that Israel was going to see an end to warfare
    - They were going to leave the wilderness
    - And see the path made smooth for an arriving King
- The second call is focused on the Son Himself
  - The good news of the Gospel will go out from Israel
  - The Word will be declared, Jesus the word of God
  - It will be a declaration that sins are forgiven by the work of the Messiah
- Finally, the last call is one that announces to Israel that Jesus is their God
  - This is the call of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of the Jews in Jerusalem
  - It is the call that leads them to their Messiah and ushers in the Kingdom