

Isaiah 40 Outline
John Hepp, Jr.

Chapter 40 opens Part II of Isaiah (chs. 40–66). It is a cosmic scene similar to the opening chapter for Part I (ch. 1), with a similar function. In it the LORD reveals the themes for this whole second part.

- I. The LORD announces His coming to comfort and rule, vv. 1–11.
 - A. God tells His heralds to announce comfort for Israel, vv. 1–2.
He has finished punishing her and will now comfort her, the main theme for Part II.
 - B. The heralds announce the LORD’s coming, vv. 3–11.
 - 1. A voice says to prepare the way for the LORD and His glory, vv. 3–5.
 - 2. Another voice says to announce that in spite of the briefness of man’s glory, God’s word will stand, vv. 6–8.
 - 3. Zion is told to announce the LORD’s coming as Ruler and Shepherd, vv. 9–11.

- II. The LORD’s strength is available for an exhausted people, vv. 12–31.
 - A. The LORD’s great strength, vv. 12–26
As Creator He is far greater than nations and idols, rulers and other gods (see chart).

Isaiah 40:12–26	
The Creator, the LORD, is Greater than Man & Man’s Gods.	
Greater Than Nations & Idols, vv. 12–20	Greater Than Rulers & Other Gods, vv. 21–26
Only He created and made order, vv. 12–14.	He is far greater than His creation, vv. 21–22.
To Him the nations are insignificant, vv. 15–17.	He quickly destroys earthly rulers, vv. 23–24.
“To whom then will you liken God?” The idols people make are utterly helpless, vv. 18–20.	“To whom then will you compare me?” Every star is His creation and His servant, vv. 25–26.

- B. Israel’s access to that strength, vv. 27–31
Israel can lay hold of the LORD’s unfailing strength by waiting for Him (that is, by faith).
 - 1. He lacks neither strength nor understanding to help, vv. 27–28.
 - 2. He helps the weak who wait for Him, vv. 29–31.

Isaiah 40 to Read/Memorize
New International Version, John Hepp, Jr.

Introduction

When the LORD God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt, He established them as His kingdom on earth (Exod. 19). Centuries later He dissolved that kingdom, calling several groups of writing prophets to explain why. Isaiah was in the first such group—and became the most quoted in the New Testament. In Isaiah’s time Assyria was God’s “rod” of judgment, as emphasized in Part I (chs. 1–39) of his book. In the same chapters Isaiah predicted that God’s kingdom will be restored under the Messiah. For memorable examples, see chapters 2, 9, 11, 25, and 35. Part I concludes with a historical interlude (chs. 36–39) that vindicates what Isaiah has preached and prepares for what follows.

Part II (chs. 40–66) changes perspective to more than a century and a half later. It speaks to the future captives—not in Assyria but in Babylonia—on the verge of being restored. These 27 chapters are usually divided into three sections of nine chapters each—see the refrain at the ends of chapters 48 and 57. Chapter 40 is the first of many subsections. Like chapter 1, it is a court scene announcing the themes that follow. The first words set the mood for all of Part II: “Comfort, comfort my people.” God’s comfort is especially directed toward Zion, the capital city being restored. Because many voices participate in this powerful Part II, Richard Moulton has called it “The Rhapsody of Zion Redeemed.”

1 Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.
2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from the LORD 's hand
double for all her sins.

3 A voice of one calling:
"In the desert prepare
the way for the LORD;^[a]
make straight in the wilderness
a highway for our God.^[b]
4 Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.
5 And the glory of the LORD will be
revealed,
and all mankind together will see it.
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."
6 A voice says, "Cry out."
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
"All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the
field.
7 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the LORD blows on
them.
Surely the people are grass.
8 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God stands forever."
9 You who bring good tidings to Zion,
go up on a high mountain.
You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem,^[c]
lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid;
say to the towns of Judah,
"Here is your God!"
10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with
power,
and his arm rules for him.
See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.

11 He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.

12 Who has measured the waters in the
hollow of his hand,
or with the breadth of his hand marked off
the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth in a
basket,
or weighed the mountains on the scales
and the hills in a balance?

13 Who has understood the mind^[d] of the
LORD,

or instructed him as his counselor?

14 Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten
him,

and who taught him the right way?

Who was it that taught him knowledge
or showed him the path of understanding?

15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a
bucket;

they are regarded as dust on the scales;
he weighs the islands as though they were
fine dust.

16 Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires,
nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.

17 Before him all the nations are as nothing;
they are regarded by him as worthless
and less than nothing.

18 To whom, then, will you compare God?

What image will you compare him to?

19 As for an idol, a craftsman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and fashions silver chains for it.

20 A man too poor to present such an
offering

selects wood that will not rot.

He looks for a skilled craftsman

to set up an idol that will not topple.

21 Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,

and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

24 No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

25 "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"?

28 Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Notes:

- a. [Isaiah 40:3](#) Or *A voice of one calling in the desert: / "Prepare the way for the LORD*
- b. [Isaiah 40:3](#) Hebrew; Septuagint *make straight the paths of our God*
- c. [Isaiah 40:9](#) Or *O Zion, bringer of good tidings, / go up on a high mountain. / O Jerusalem, bringer of good tidings*
- d. [Isaiah 40:13](#) Or *Spirit; or spirit*