

• *God's promise – He will restore His people*

Isaiah has given us a glorious promise. God will restore his people and use them again^{□1}. The question is: how can it happen? The answer is: God is sufficiently powerful to bring it about. Isaiah points us to the greatness of the character of God^{□2} and then he applies what he has said. How can anyone be discouraged^{□3}?

□1 40:1-2

□2 40:12-26

□3 40:27-31

1. Only God has power as the Creator

First, he points us to the greatness of God.

1. Only God has power as the Creator.

*¹²Who 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?*

• *God has made the universe*

Without any help God has made the universe to be precisely and exactly what it is.

*¹³Who has comprehended the Spirit of Yahweh,
or instructed him as his counsellor?*

• *Only Yahweh has enough wisdom*

The answer to the question is: only Yahweh has sufficient wisdom to be the Creator. No other deity could possibly have made any contribution.

*¹⁴Whom did Yahweh consult to enlighten him,
and who taught him the path of good judgement?
Who was it that taught him knowledge
or showed him the path of understanding?*

• *The world is vast*

Isaiah points to the vastness of the world.

*¹⁵Surely the nations are like a drop splashing from
a bucket;
they are regarded as dust on the scales;
he weighs the distant lands as though they were fine dust.*

• *No sacrifice is worthy*

The whole of Lebanon and its animals would not make a sacrifice worthy of him.

*¹⁶Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires,
nor its animals enough for burnt-offerings.
¹⁷Before him all the nations are as nothing;
they are regarded by him as empty of meaning
and less than nothing.*

2. So the idols of Assyria and of Babylon are nothing

2. So the idols of Assyria and of Babylon are nothing. Why should they be honoured at all? If God is as Isaiah has described him, then in comparison the idols are ridiculous monstrosities, at best.

*¹⁸To whom, then, will you compare God?
What image will you compare him to?
¹⁹An idol, which a craftsman fashions?
A goldsmith overlays it with gold
and fashions silver chains for it.
²⁰An impoverished man in presenting any offering
selects wood that will not rot.
He looks for a skilled craftsman
to set up an idol that will not move.*

• *Idols are ridiculous monstrosities*

Surely – says Isaiah – it is ridiculous that something made in the carpenter's shop last week should be a rival to the exalted God of the Bible!

3. Because God is the Creator, he is the unique King

- God reigns supreme

- Earthly kings are feeble by comparison

3. Because God is the Creator, he is the unique King.

*²¹Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not been made to discern,
since the earth was founded?*

With immense ease God the King reigns supreme over the universe.

*²²There is one who 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.*

Earthly kings are feeble compared to him. He brings them to nothing any time he wishes.

*²³He brings princes to naught
and reduces the judges of this world to nothing.
²⁴They are planted indeed!
They are sown.
They take root in the ground.
Then he blows on them and they wither,
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.*

4. No rival claim to deity can be put forward

- He is also 'the Holy One'

- We must admire the Creator

- How can anyone be discouraged when God is so great?

4. No rival claim to deity can be put forward. God is beyond comparison.

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

The divine King is also 'the Holy One'. Unlike dumb idols he speaks.

*²⁶Lift 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 great power and as one strong in power,
not one of them is missing.*

If we ever gaze in admiration at the stars we must admire even more the one who made them. If the number of the stars we can see overwhelms us, it is more overwhelming to think God knows them each one as we know our friends by name.

Second, Isaiah applies what he has said. How can anyone be discouraged? Isaiah 40:12-26 points to the One who can fulfil the promises of 40:1–2. How can we complain at what happens to us?

How can we feel ignored?

*²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob,
and complain, O Israel,
'My way is hidden from Yahweh;
my cause is disregarded by my God'?
²⁸Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
Yahweh is God of eternity,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

• We cannot remain despondent

Nor can we ever allow ourselves to be despondent for long.

*He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.
29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the durability of the weak.
30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
31 but those who hope in Yahweh
keep putting on fresh strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

• While we wait for the promises to be fulfilled we prayerfully hope in Yahweh

• We wait for the day when all nations will stream to God's church

While we wait for the promises of 40:1-2 to be fulfilled, there is available for us God-given strength. It does not come with machine-like automation, but is experienced as we 'hope' in Yahweh. The word refers to patient, forward-looking prayerfulness. Salvation for the world is coming. Those who hope in Yahweh will be given strength. The greatest part of the promise has (since the time of Jesus) been given to us already. Now we continue to work and wait for the day when all nations will stream to God's church.



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