

I thought this would be a good point to insert a statement about the authorship of Isaiah that I learned from Chuck Missler. Much discussion has taken place regarding the possibility of Isaiah having had more than one author—one for chapters 1-39 and one for chapters 40-66. In the gospel of John the Holy Spirit inspired the author to quote from both sections of Isaiah, attributing both quotes to Isaiah, and confirming Isaiah as the author of the whole book.

John 12:38-40 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

Verse 38 is quoting from Isaiah 53 and verse 40 is quoting from Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 53:1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

Isaiah 6:10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Is. 40:1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

“comfort” = console, ease; and from Webster: To impart strength and hope to; to encourage; to relieve; to console; to cheer.

It would seem that the Lord is talking to Isaiah and instructing him to bring a message of comfort and consolation to His people in Jerusalem/Judah. Isaiah had just told Hezekiah, the king, that the people were to expect a period of captivity in Babylon. The message of comfort was that although judgment was coming, God’s people would yet find forgiveness and restoration. This added a message of hope and encouragement to temper that of the coming judgment. Also of note are the expressions “my people” and “your God.” God has not abandoned His people. He is demonstrating His love by not letting their sin go unpunished.

Deuteronomy 8:5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.

Proverbs 19:18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Hebrews 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Revelation 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...

Is. 40:2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

The prophet's perspective as he gives this message is projected to the time of the end of the captivity. The Lord wants His message delivered with heartfelt kindness (from the Hebrew for *comfortably*). The Hebrew for the word *warfare* is a reference to an appointed time of hardship. At the end of the Babylonian captivity, God wants His people to know that He considers them to have been punished sufficiently for their sins—their sin debt had been paid (from the Hebrew for *pardoned*). Their slate will be clean; they will get a new beginning in their relationship with Him.

The phrase “double for all her sins” is a Hebrew expression for “paid in full.” Joe Focht explained it as twinned (Hebrew = a duplicate), in that the judgment exactly matches the sin—no more, no less.

Reminder: Isaiah writes in a poetic Hebrew style that includes repetition/parallelism.

Is. 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Is. 40:4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

Is. 40:5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

From our perspective, we can see that the prophet's message now jumps to an even more future time. He begins to describe events that will precede the coming of the Messiah. It would seem that there is going to be a special prophet that will arrive on the scene shortly before the appearance of the Messiah to announce His coming. It is also a statement identifying the Messiah as the LORD God.

I was quite surprised at the Hebrew for the word “prepare” --to turn; by implication, to face, i.e. appear, look, etc. This section of Isaiah was quoted by Luke, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to describe the ministry of John the Baptist. When making a connection of this scripture to John's ministry, it would seem to indicate a message of repentance (turning from sin) and looking for the Messiah (soon to appear on the scene).

Luke 3:2-6 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Preparing the way would seem to be the ministry of preparing the hearts of God's people to eagerly accept their Messiah and King.

The ministry of John the Baptist seems to foreshadow the ministry that Elijah will have before Jesus returns as King according to Malachi.

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD....

The word for *desert* seems to indicate a possible reference to the area from the Jordan Valley to the Red Sea, which includes the area of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, the target audience of Isaiah's prophecy.

Verse 4 seems to be referencing a time of geographical changes. Since *preparing the way* seems to be referencing spiritual preparation of the hearts of the people, I would tend to think that Isaiah is using his poetic style to reiterate the truth of verse 3. The commentaries speak of removing obstacles that would impede the journey or arrival of the king to a certain area. Jesus clearly states in scripture that He will not return until His people are prepared to receive Him—there are no obstacles in the hearts of His people to accepting Him as Messiah and King.

Matthew 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The Old Testament scriptures support the truth of that statement.

Zechariah 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Obviously, this time is yet future for the people of Israel.

Verse 5 is a description of the visible coming of the Lord to planet earth. The phrase "all flesh shall see it" is a further proof that this time is yet future. Jesus' first coming to planet earth was not in a glorious manner seen by the whole world. His second coming, however, will be seen by every eye.

Revelation 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

"for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" – The scriptures reiterate many times over that God's word is true; it will never fail.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Joshua 23:14 And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

1Kings 8:56 Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.

Isaiah 14:24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:

Isaiah 46:11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Is. 40:6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:

Is. 40:7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

Is. 40:8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The Hebrew indicates a voice, not the voice as the beginning of verse 6. That would make more sense to me. The prophet crying in the wilderness is hearing instruction concerning his message. That message is that a person's life is fleeting; it won't last forever. The word for *goodliness* is a reference to kindness. The flower gives beauty among the grass. Even the people who represent the flowers in God's field of grass will only live for a designated time.

It would seem that there are more spiritual applications that can be made through the meanings for some of these words in the Hebrew. The word for *withereth* includes the idea of shame, confusion, disappointment, and drying up. The word for *fadeth* includes the idea of wilting, falling away, failing, to be foolish or (morally) wicked, despise and disgrace. As I contemplate the spiritual application, it seems to be saying that mankind in general is in a state of shame and confusion; they are a disappointment to themselves and God. They are drying up; they have no ability to give spiritual encouragement or strength to one another. Even the recognized *flowers* (who I am equating with those who are following God in faith) among men will experience failure and foolishness. They will eventually be despised and disgraced by their fellowman for their stand of faith. They can even experience an attitude of despising themselves because of sin that enters their life that would bring disgrace to God. Maybe I am reading quite a bit more into these verses than the obvious meaning, but I believe these are valid deductions.

In contrast to the finite existence of man in these present physical bodies, God is ever the same; He never changes. His word will stand forever; it will never fail; He will never fail.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not...

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Is. 40:9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

I like the translation from the Complete Jewish Bible for this verse.

*You who bring good news to Tziyon,
get yourself up on a high mountain;
you who bring good news to Yerushalayim,
cry out at the top of your voice!
Don't be afraid to shout out loud!
Say to the cities of Y'hudah,
"Here is your God!"*

It would seem that prophet is being encouraged to deliver his message to God's people boldly and confidently. The good news—the Messiah is coming! Shouldn't we be doing the same!

Is. 40:10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

Is. 40:11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.

When God comes to earth as King in the person of the Messiah, He will come in full power and authority. I thought it was interesting that the word *reward* indicates a "payment of contract." This seems to be referencing His fulfillment of His covenant with the nation of Israel through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

"work" = to do or make (systematically and habitually), especially to practise

This word makes a statement to me of how God will rule as King on planet earth. He will continue to exhibit the attributes that He has always exhibited according to His habit and practice—righteousness, holiness, faithfulness, etc. He will continue to be the Good Shepherd. He will feed His flock both physically and spiritually.

Lambs represent the young and weak; God's arm is representative of His strength. He will provide physical and spiritual strength to those that are physically and spiritually weak. To "carry them in his bosom" is an expression of protection and security. The Hebrew for *lead* states "to run with a sparkle, flow, protect, sustain." The Hebrew for "with young" states "to suckle, to give

milk.” This seems to be a reference to special care taken to energize, protect and sustain those who are in a position of caring for and feeding those new to the flock. As people continue to be born in the millennial kingdom, the 1,000 years that Jesus rules on the throne of David on planet earth (Rev 20:4), they will still need to make a choice regarding acceptance of God’s gift of salvation. They will still need to receive spiritual training and instruction.

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Unbelievably, many will still choose to reject salvation even after experiencing the blessings of the righteous rule of Messiah.

Revelation 20:7-8 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

Is. 40:12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

At this point Isaiah begins to pose some interesting questions to God’s people. The content of these questions make statements of truth about God. They are intended to impress upon His people just how awesome their God is. The question is rhetorical; the answer is understood—God.

God has measured the waters of the earth in hollow of His hand (singular). Think about the quantity of water on earth; look at your own hand—staggering, unfathomable!

God measured the width of heaven with the *span*. This seems to be referencing heaven as the place that contains the clouds, planets, and stars. The *span* is a reference to the distance between the thumb and the pinkie finger when stretched to its greatest distance. Look at the sky; spread out the fingers on your hand and consider—awesome, unbelievable!

The next phrase is a little more difficult. The word *measure* in this phrase is yet a different Hebrew word; it seems to include an emphasis on three, such as a three-fold measure (length, width, breadth?). Whatever--it would still represent a finite unit of measure that I am sure was recognized by the people first receiving this message. Just try to imagine all the dust of the earth gathered into one spot—impossible!

Most scales in biblical days operated on a system of weights and balances. Try to imagine scales large enough to weigh the hills and mountains.

This verse definitely gives a description of Someone far beyond our comprehension or understanding.

Is. 40:13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counsellor hath taught him?

Another rhetorical question; the obvious answer—no one.

Is. 40:14 With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

Isaiah seems to be repeating the previous question, but with reference to more of His attributes. God is the source of all counsel, instruction, judgment, knowledge, and understanding.

*Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, **Counsellor**, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

Psalms 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

*Psalms 89:14 Justice and **judgment** are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

*Proverbs 2:6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh **knowledge** and **understanding**.*

Is. 40:15 Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

Is. 40:16 And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

Is. 40:17 All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

Isaiah continues to make the point of the awesomeness of God compared to anything relative to human understanding. Even all the great trees of Lebanon or all the animals in Lebanon would not represent a proper sacrifice for God.

As I read these verses I can't help but be reminded of the words of David:

Psalms 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

Is. 40:18 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

My paraphrase--In consideration of all these facts about God, to whom or what can you compare Him? This leads directly into a comparison of the true God and man's pathetic attempts to create his own gods.

Is. 40:19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

Is. 40:20 He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree *that will not rot*; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, *that shall not be moved*.

Isaiah now expresses the foolishness of his people's worship of idols. He begins with the fact that they are handmade.

Men choose a person who is skilled at melting metals to form an image and then cover it with gold and decorate it with silver chains. Those who are poor will have their gods created by one skilled at carving wood. They are careful to choose a wood that will not rot in hopes of creating a "god" that is durable, one that stands firm.

What kind of comparison does this "god" have to the God described in the previous verses?

Is. 40:21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

Is. 40:22 *It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:*

Verse 21 poses some questions meant to humble His people. They did know, had heard, had been told from the beginning that God is the Creator; there is no other God. I think *establish* would have been a better choice than *sitteth* in verse 22. This is a declaration from God that the earth is round; at this time, the earth was thought to be flat. From God's perspective the people on earth are like grasshoppers, truly insignificant except for the significance that He assigns to them. God has spread out the heavens as a tent to provide a dwelling place for man. All that we know about the heavens today reveal this "tent" to be quite amazing and lavish.

Is. 40:23 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

Is. 40:24 Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

It is God who thwarts the purposes of rulers and leaders on earth according to His own purposes. Daniel affirms this truth:

Daniel 2:20-21 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: *he removeth*

kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

Although God has given man the ability to choose and act independently, God is ever in control.

Is. 40:25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

As I continue to read these verses, I can't help but connect with God's dialogue with Job. All He has to do is pose the questions to make Job understand that he should not question God's actions. He is not capable of understanding God or of a character to question God's righteousness or His actions.

Is. 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he is strong in power; not one faileth.*

The prophet encourages the people to look to the heavens and think about their Creator. Not only did He create them, He has a name for every star and every planet; He knows exactly how many there are. The heavens remain constant through the strength and force exerted by the Creator. He is the Source of the laws of science and the power that sustains the universe.

Colossians 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Not one heavenly body deviates from its designed path or purpose.

Is. 40:27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

I like the phrasing in the NLT for this verse: *O Israel, how can you say the LORD does not see your troubles? How can you say God refuses to hear your case?*

This is a legitimate question. Time and again in Israel's history has God come to their deliverance. Their history is full of proofs of His judgment and forgiveness and blessing.

I know that God wants each of His children to consider that same question. All we have to do is remember how God has delivered us, protected us, blessed us, and, yes, chastised us in the past, to recognize His love for us.

Is. 40:28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*

Again, God's people know the answer to this question. They are being exhorted to remember the awesomeness of their God. He is *everlasting*—from vanishing point to vanishing point, without beginning or ending. "The LORD" is a

reference to YHWH, Jehovah, the name that was significant to His relationship with Israel through His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Exodus 6:2-4 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

Jehovah is the same God that created the heavens and the earth. He never tires or weakens. He is beyond our understanding.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Is. 40:29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

Is. 40:30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

Is. 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

God never runs out of strength or endurance; He is able to give power and endurance to His children as they have need. The youths and young men represent men at the peak of their strength, but even they run out of strength and energy. Their endurance is not limitless; God has no limit.

I hadn't noticed it before, but verse 31 is addressed to God's people as a group. I noticed it when I looked at the Hebrew for "wait." It means to bind together in expectation and patience. God never intended for us to be loners in our journey through life on this planet. Strength is increased by numbers.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

The eagle was representative of the most powerful bird with the sharpest vision; God will equip us with the physical strength and spiritual insight needed to navigate the circumstances of life. As I think of "mounting up with wings," I think of the ability to stay above the circumstances when the going gets tough. To run without getting exhausted speaks to me of the strength and energy necessary to get through those tough times. Walking without getting tired speaks of the ability to maintain the pace through the "normal" times in life.

Though best utilized by God's people in unity with one another, I believe this truth is also applicable to the individual.