

With chapter 40, we enter into what could accurately be described as "the heart" of Isaiah's prophecy. Throughout chapters 1-39, the tone of God's prophet has been dominated by a confrontational pronouncement of judgment. The descendants of Abraham *will* be disciplined by Babylon. But in chapter 40 and beyond, the tone of the prophet's message shifts to comfort and assurance. Why? The servant of the LORD is coming, and with him, a powerful display of God's glory. After being strongly warned about who not to trust (Isa 28-35), here is the One in whom God's brokenhearted people can truly hope.

Key passages:

- 40:1-8: why does God now want his people to be comforted? In what form does this comfort come? In your own words, what does the LORD want his people to recognize and understand? Where in the New Testament do we find more than one of these statements referenced, and what can we learn from those references?

- 40:9-31: what is the emphasis of this section? What impression needs to be made upon God's people? And what is the LORD promising to do for his people?

- 41:1-20: how does the LORD reassure his people that he, above all others, is guiding the course of human history for his purpose and ultimate glory? How does he describe himself in terms that can reassure, comfort, and humble anyone who is willing to listen?

- 41:21-29: in contrast, what do the people need to recognize about idols?

- 42:1-9: after challenging the validity and worth of any idol, the LORD presents his "servant" in the first of four "servant songs" (49:1-13; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12)—beautiful references that will find their eventual fulfillment in Jesus. What stands out to you about the LORD's servant in this first song?

- 42:10-44:28: in light of everything God has communicated in this section, what do his people need to hear, recognize, apply, and guard against?

The takeaways:

- As those who "should remember the predictions of the holy prophets" (2 Pet 3:2), what should we take away from this section of Isaiah's prophecy?