

## **God's Command to Speak Comfort to Israel**

### **I. ENGAGING WITH TWO KEY COMMANDS IN ISAIAH TO THE NATIONS**

- A. There are two key commands that are given in the book of Isaiah that are from the Lord to Gentile nations. The first command is to “sing” (Isa. 5:1; 12:5; 23:16; 24:14; 26:19; 27:2; 35:6; 38:20; 42:10-11; 44:23; 49:13; 52:8-9; 54:1; 65:14) and the second command is to “comfort”. We are to both sing to Israel and comfort Israel in the days to come. As God’s people, we are to **know** the storyline of His good and skillful leadership, we are to **proclaim** His beauty and glory related to His plans and purposes, and we are to **sing** from a heart of genuine adoration and wonder.
- B. The command to comfort is primarily found in Isaiah 40:1-2. Isaiah 40 is the premiere passage giving the “table of contents” for the remainder of his oracles, which are primarily focused on Israel’s future. The content of our proclamation and the fountain of the knowledge of God that is to fuel our songs is found at the heart of this chapter: “**Behold your God!**” One of the most practical ways that we can serve Israel is to be consumed with love, gratitude, and desire for Israel’s God.
- C. Much of our lives are spent *building a history in God* as we experience the truth of His word in a manner that builds our faith and confidence in His leadership. As God was with young David with the lion and the bear, David could be confident that God was with him when he faced Goliath, and later King Saul.
- D. God will interact with the peoples of the earth in an unprecedented way that will “shake everything that can be shaken” until only that which cannot be shaken remains (Heb. 12:26-27). The “diet” that prepares us for that “great and terrible day” (Joel 2:11) is from the place of intimacy with God **beholding Him** as He reminds us that *His word and His promises stand forever* (Isaiah 40:8) and that *He will come personally to deliver Israel from all her enemies*.
- E. We begin to take the two commands of God in these passages seriously by laboring to behold God though prayerfully studying His word.
1. **Application #1:** Over time, the truths about God that come through beholding Him in His word must make their way to our **prayer** lives. Truth integrated into our regular conversations with the Lord powerfully transforms our thinking and emotions.
  2. **Application #2:** Then, after a time, they must permeate our **singing** life. Songs often burst forth out of us from the overflow of our genuine gratitude, worship, and adoration.
  3. **Application #3:** The beauty that we behold, pray, and sing ultimately becomes beauty we **proclaim**. Transformative beauty is beauty that we effortlessly evangelize to others.
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4. **Application #4:** As the beauty of God's leadership and character bring us profound comfort through the darkest hours of our lives, we will be able to give **comfort** to Israel in her darkest hour.

F. In 2 Corinthians 2:3-7, Paul wrote extensively about the ministry of comfort. We comfort others out of the source of our own comfort:

***<sup>3</sup>Praise be to God...the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. <sup>5</sup>For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. <sup>6</sup>If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup>And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. (2 Cor. 2:3-7)***

1. How have you been comforted by the gospel and the word of your testimony? How have the activity of the Holy Spirit and His interactions with us by grace served as a source of comfort that strengthens our faith and our resolve to love Jesus? We want to build a history with God that involves finding profound comfort in God's love and leadership amid painful seasons of trial, testing, disappointment, and ultimately, persecution and storms that will come. In our moments of great pain, where do we find strength and hope?
2. Intercessors who have been comforted by the beauty of God and His loving leadership will be surprised in the days to come to find themselves in key moments and strategic positions to "burst forth into song". Singing always feels strange at first when it happens outside of its normal contexts. Yet songs have significant power to shift hearts and atmospheres as songs persist.
3. Intercessors will be, therefore, a significant source of comfort and strength to any who find themselves in their darkest moment. Spontaneous songs of the beauty and majesty of the Lord will cut through fear, anger, hopelessness, and more to make hearts buoyant and light in the face of the unleashed evil of demonized men.
4. The gospel of the kingdom preached with authority and clarity will impart great courage into the hearts of singers to sing in the coming days. Singing with true joy in the face of certain death will be one of the most powerful witnesses of the worth and beauty of Christ that the end-time Church will express in a historic context for martyrdom (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 12:11; 17:6).
5. The full comfort of salvation is anchored in seeing the future and eternal aspects of the biblical narrative. This is the primary place of comfort to Israel, the Church, and the nations. Preachers and intercessors will draw from an eternal perspective to bring comfort to the afflicted, persecuted, and the oppressed.

## II. THE COMMAND TO COMFORT TO ISRAEL (ISAIAH 40:1-2)

- A. Isaiah issued a twofold call to the Lord's messengers to comfort to Jerusalem (40:1-2) and to prepare the way of the Lord or to "build a spiritual highway for the Lord" by preparing people spiritually for the coming of the Lord (40:3-5). This "messenger calling" is for any who will answer it. The Holy Spirit is stirring people in this hour to answer the call to comfort Jerusalem and to prepare the way of the Lord by "building a spiritual highway" for the Lord.

***<sup>1</sup>"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. <sup>2</sup>"Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins."* (Isa. 40:1-2)**

- B. **Speak comfort:** The Lord commanded His messengers to comfort or strengthen Jerusalem (40:1).

1. There are two groups being addressed in Isaiah 40:1. The Lord commands the global body of Christ who love and listen to God (yet who are distinct from Jerusalem) to give a message of comfort to a group referred to as "My people Jerusalem" (who live in Jerusalem). The first group includes Gentile believers speaking an end-time message of comfort to Jerusalem.
2. There is intensity and urgency in God's command— "*comfort, yes, comfort.*" The context of this passage is the end-time plans and strategies of the Antichrist to crush and destroy Jerusalem and exterminate the Jewish people. He will bring his powerful armies, military alliances, political allies, economic might, and unprecedented demonic authority to bear down on Israel. It will truly be the time of "Jacob's Trouble" (Jer. 30:7) and it will seem utterly hopeless for Israel and Jerusalem at that time. The promise of deliverance and redemption will come swiftly through prophetic messengers and singers.
3. Isaiah 40 is an exhortation to comfort and prepare people for the Lord by telling the whole story. It reveals the end of the story, our ministry focus, and God's character and power. The story brings comfort to the measure that it transcends our circumstances, pressures, and pain. The comfort we are to bring must bear the fruit of Israel's willingness to "wait on the Lord" in perseverance in the context of her greatest trial.

- C. God called Gentile believers in the ends of the world and in the chief of nations to comfort Israel. The "messenger mandate" to comfort Jerusalem is given to believers in the ends of the earth. Will you answer this call to proclaim God's message to Jerusalem (the daughter of Zion)?

***<sup>1</sup>Indeed the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the world: "Say to the daughter of Zion,  
'Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him...'" (Isa. 62:11)***

1. The global body of Christ is to comfort and strengthen Jerusalem. They are to sing, boldly shout, and declare God’s message of the salvation of Israel (Jer. 31:7-10). This message will be challenging to speak in context to the rage of Satan and the Antichrist against Israel in the end times. There will be significant persecution and penalty for any who aid, comfort, or stand on behalf of Israel in that hour.

***<sup>7</sup>Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, “O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!”...<sup>10</sup>Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.” (Jer. 31:7-10)***

2. God is calling anyone who will answer the call to be a messenger to comfort Israel. The command to comfort Israel is not subject to our giftedness, intellect, or personal zeal. It is an issue of **faith** that leans into grace for “skill to understand” (Dan. 9:22) and produces perseverance, character, and hope during great trials (Rom. 5:1-5).

### III. THE “CONTENT” OF THE MESSAGE AND THE SONG OF COMFORT

- A. The content of the message that the Church worldwide will proclaim and sing to Israel will be one of great assurance and hope. The message begins with the assurance that the war that the nations have declared against her (Zech. 12:1-2) will come to a swift and complete end. In other words, the Church will be calling on Israel to remember the covenant Yahweh made with His servant David, which includes the promise of the end of *all* of Israel’s warfare and the defeat of *all* her enemies, not just the Antichrist and his war at the end of the age.

***<sup>4</sup>He [Jesus] shall judge between the nations...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, ...nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isa. 2:4)***

- B. Paul in Romans 11, when speaking of “all Israel saved”, references Isaiah 59 and 26 to teach the Gentile church about the *quality* of Israel’s salvation. The Deliverer / Redeemer will come forth to rescue Israel from her enemies *and* her own sin and compromise. Her sins will be pardoned, or “taken away” and she will be fully cleansed. Rather than chastisement and condemnation, Israel will receive a double portion of grace and honor, taking her place as the Head of all the Nations as Jesus sits as crowned King within her walls. Jerusalem will truly be the “City of the Great King”.

***<sup>7</sup>Instead of your shame you shall have double honor ...they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. (Isa. 61:7)***

1. The glory of God will be openly manifested in Jerusalem (60:1-3).

***<sup>1</sup>Arise, shine; for...the glory of the LORD is risen upon you [Jerusalem]. <sup>2</sup>For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth...His glory will be seen upon you.***

**<sup>3</sup>The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isa. 60:1-3)**

2. Jerusalem will be praised by all nations as the joy of the earth (Isa. 62:7).  
Jerusalem will be the city that most people in the nations will visit with great joy.

**<sup>7</sup>And give Him no rest till He establishes...Jerusalem a praise in the earth. (Isa. 62:7)**

3. Mount Zion or Jerusalem will be the joy of the earth (Ps. 48:1-2).

**<sup>2</sup>...the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion...the city of the great King. (Ps. 48:2)**

- C. Isaiah 40:6-8 is the declaration of the certainty of God's plans and promises coming to pass in fullness. 40:9-26 is the exhortation to Israel to "*Behold your God!*" along with the apologetic of the Lord for His matchless power and might to prevail over Israel's enemies. Nothing that the nations can or will do will slow down God's plan one moment longer than He desires. When the final stages of God's plans are finished and His promises fulfilled, Israel will know that His plan could not be improved upon or helped along in any way (40:13-14). The God of Israel is matchless and incomparable with any other "rival powers" (40:18) and His whirlwind will make their enemies blow away like stubble (40:24).
- D. These words are a purposeful contrast to the power the Antichrist will bring to bear – to comfort Israel is to tell them that they have not been forgotten by Yahweh (40:27-28). Israel must wait with hope on their deliverance by His faithful hand (40:29-31).