

# Comfort Ye My People

by Ken Burnett

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*God's people have a responsibility to bring comfort to others through prayer, confession, and practical action, using the Word of God as their guide.*

**Duration:** 52:59

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:3, Isaiah 40:6-9, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 24:35, Luke 3:3

**Topics:** "Comfort"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of the nation of Israel in relation to the preaching of the gospel to the whole world. He explains that the rebirth of Israel in 1948 is a sign of the coming of Jesus Christ. The preacher believes that the full revelation to the nation of Israel will come during the time of Jacob's Tribulation, which is also mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39. He references Jeremiah 31 to support his argument and emphasizes that God is moving and the gospel is becoming available to the whole nation of Israel.

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## Transcript

over his people. And one interpretation of that is, the Lord your God is in your midst, right in the middle of his people. It's a wonderful passage.

Just before I begin this morning, I just want to explain to some of you who have signed up for the bulletin but haven't taken what we call an initial pack. If you signed up a few days ago, on the table over there, there are these packs which contain three or four pieces of literature. Would you like to take that with you? And then the rest of you, would you just take note that there is on the table over there, or there are on the table over there, these items.

A brief historical, statistical and prophetic guide, which looks like that. Two videotape lists, one of videos that you can purchase and others that you can have on comparatively inexpensive loan, called Watchmen on the Walls Video Ministries. They look like that.

Please take them and avail yourselves of those materials. We have a lot of books of various kinds, some suitable for Jewish people, and the literature list is on the table that looks like that, and you can order them from the PFI office. There's a map of several of the fellowships in Israel that we pray for, and remember there are 60, we only list a few of them, and the map looks something like that.

That will help you to pinpoint and help you to pray. And then a Bible study on God's frozen people, chosen people. This was compiled in Cyrancestor some 20 years ago, by the way, out of a youth Bible study, and some people have found it very useful.

And finally, of course, the PFI Prayer Bulletin, which consists of one page of teaching, one page of notices and materials, two pages of prayer fuel, out of which, if you're new, we suggest you take just one or two items to begin with, so that you don't get indigestion. Bless the Lord. Well, now I'm going to begin my talk, and I want to turn you to the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 40.

Maybe it would be good just to remind ourselves that Isaiah is almost more an evangelist than a prophet. The first part of Isaiah, the first 39 chapters, speaks to the nation and to the world of judgment, coming judgments, and so on. But the second part, which begins with chapter 40, begins really with a pointing to the Messiah and his glory, and it's addressed in particular to the remnant, not merely the remnant of Israel, but speaking a lot to the Church.

Isaiah speaks 26 times of the Holy One of Israel. 26 times that term is used. Only three times you find it elsewhere in the Word of God.

And it's a wonderful kaleidoscope of the history of the nation, from chapter 1, the sinful nation, right up to the peace like a river in chapter 66 that's going to flow from Jerusalem. There's no more stirring book in the Word of God, no more noble language in the Word of God than the Prophet Isaiah. And Isaiah himself means, the name means, of Jehovah.

So let me take you then to chapter 40. I want to proceed the remarks about that chapter with the fact that Isaiah was the only complete scroll of Scripture found in 1947 down towards the Dead Sea. It's tremendously significant that Isaiah was found in its completeness, and that what we call Second Isaiah, which begins with chapter 40, really is God speaking afresh to the Church, to you and me, and to his nation Israel.

It's no accident that that chapter, a copy of Isaiah 40, was placed in front of every member of the Israeli Parliament, the first Israeli Parliament, on May the 14th, 1948, 50 years ago. And it starts off with, God was speaking and still speaking, of course, to the nation. The question is, is he speaking also to us? And I believe that he is.

And I'm going to read then, in stages, parts of this chapter, beginning with the first two verses. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. And I'm going to mix the versions.

It goes on to say, in my version, speak kindly, speak tenderly, speak to the very heart of Jerusalem. And call out to her that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. Now let's pause there.

First of all, we have this word, comfort, which actually forms the backbone of names like Menachem. The word is actually Nachum in Hebrew. You have a prophet by the name of Nachum.

It's concealed in the name of Nehemiah, who was a prophet who brought comfort again to God's people. And I want you to notice here that this term has a double emphasis. It's comfort, comfort.

It's not comfort my people, but it's repeated twice. As in Isaiah chapter 26, verse 3, thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee. In Hebrew, thou wilt keep him in shalom, shalom.

And the Hebrew practice is to repeat the word twice, and that's what you get here. And so God is putting a great emphasis, where this chapter opens, on comfort for his people. And we need to take note of the sudden transition here from chapter 39, where you find the judgment, the warning in Hezekiah's day of the people of Jerusalem and Israel going to be carried off into Babylon.

And that prophecy, to an extent, is still in existence. Its completion is still before us with the large worldwide scattering still. And so we need to apply it with the background of the scattered people of Israel.

Remembering Jeremiah's word to us, Jeremiah 31, the new covenant chapter, which we're told that he that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock. That prophecy travels all the way from 70 AD right up to the present day. The one that scattered Israel is the same one, the shepherd of Israel, who is going to and who is in the process of gathering him.

So let's begin this chapter with the background of that scattering that Hezekiah was warned about. And notice here that there are three people involved in this exhortation. My people, that possessive term that God uses, my people, they belong to me, they're my purchased possession, just as you are.

So are the people of Israel, even in their rebellion. They still have God as their father, even though they've wandered away. That's the one category.

The second one, of course, is your God. God is in this verse here. He's the second person, if we wish.

But then the third person is you. Comfort ye. That's in the plural.

Comfort ye, comfort ye. In other words, it's your job. And I maintain that if comfort, whatever that word means, is to be brought to any part of this world, it has to be through God's people.

It has to be those that are part of God's Church, those who are born again of the Spirit. And it's not here as a suggestion. It's an imperative.

Comfort ye, or comfort ye my people. And this leads in, this is the opening part, the signpost to the whole of the rest of Isaiah, right up to chapter 66. And let's just turn to the end of the book, shall we, Isaiah 66 at this point, just to see how the story ends.

And we could take it up perhaps in verse 8. Who has heard such a thing, who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? And of course, in the physical sense, that happened in 1948 when Israel came back onto the world map again in an instant of time. And then, can a nation be brought forth all at once? And we find elsewhere, in the book of Zechariah, that the spiritual rebirth of the nation occurs again in one day. You read in Zechariah chapter 3 verse 9, the words, I will remove the iniquity of that land in a single day.

What God can do in an instant by His Holy Spirit in you and in me, He's going to achieve in a total nation. And of course, it really is related to Zechariah 12, where the spirit of grace and supplication is poured upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and so on, the whole nation, in other words. Notice it's grace.

It's only by grace can I pray and seek God. And I need the grace before I can supplicate. So pray for God's grace.

It's not of works. They're not going to become gradually better. They're going to get what they don't deserve.

It's God's mercy, as I need as well. So here is how it ends. As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.

It's a picture then of the church travailing, of believers travailing in Israel. God promises, shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery, says the Lord, or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb, says your God, be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her. So that's a picture of how they all lived happily ever after, if we look at the book.

So we are called here to be responsible in bringing what God calls here, comfort ye, oh comfort ye my people, sayeth your God. I'd like to remind ourselves that the same Holy Spirit that breathes upon this page here, bringing comfort, is the same Holy Spirit that spoke through Paul, as I mentioned yesterday in Romans 9, who says, who affirmed before his God, I'm telling the truth in Christ, I'm not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I could, I had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart, for I could wish myself accursed from Christ, cut off from him for the sake of my brethren.

The same Holy Spirit that prompted and imparted that anguish there, in Romans chapter 9, is the one who's speaking to us today, crying to the Church, comfort ye, oh comfort ye my people. And we can see the demonstration of that comfort in three stages, if we were to look at the Prophet Nehemiah, and his name means comforter, consoler, he's a type of the Holy Spirit. We just turn to the book of Nehemiah, we get the first stage in chapter 1, verse 3, where we find the remnant in great distress, the wall of Jerusalem broken down and its gates burned with fire, and we find Nehemiah mourning and fasting for days, in verse 4. That's the first stage, which is prayer.

And the second stage is confession. And there's a measure of need within the Church to confess of our negligence towards these people of God, in not obeying the Scripture. Verse 6, he confesses the sins of the sons of Israel, which we have sinned against thee.

And the negligence, generally, of the Church being involved in many good things, and I owe so much to the body of Christ for where I stand, but failing to know that God still has a heart for the prodigal son of the Father. And then in chapter 2, we find him putting feet to his prayers, doing something practical, where the king said, what can I do for you, you've got all this sorrow. And he says in verse 5, if it please the king and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my father's tombs, that I may rebuild it.

God can do that to you, practically or spiritually. He can send you to Judah on your knees in prayer, and you can take part in that rebuilding. In PFI, we call ourselves the Temple Rebuilder, that is restoring the priesthood.

There are other ministries that are more rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah was a wall builder. But Ezra, in his day, started with the altar and the temple.

And in the main in PFI, we're called to pray for the spiritual restoration of the land. Though there of course is a great need to pray for its protection, pray on the political side, pray for Netanyahu and so on. So there's some examples of how a comfort can be imparted.

The word means Nahum, something akin to sorrow and compassion and repentance. Nahum, it's likely the H that was breathed into Abraham. That is the kind of guttural sound.

And it's a breathing deeply of one's feelings that can be physically manifested, as they were of course in Nehemiah's case. It's not just a there, there, there, a pat on the back, but encouragement and strengthening. And I have known in a wonderful way, particularly a body of believers, with the right sensitive approach can bring real comfort and faith and hope into the lives of Jewish people.

And we find the word used elsewhere of God relenting of judgments that he had planned to bring. The same word is used in the other sense. And in the final analysis, let's remember that it's only God that can bring true comfort.

We're his vehicles, but in the end it's him. And I want to turn you to Isaiah again, chapter 51. I'm going to read three passages where that comfort that he alone can bring in such a wonderful way.

Isaiah chapter 51, and we read in verse three, indeed the Lord will comfort Zion. He will comfort all her waste places and her wilderness he will make like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord. In Corinthians you read of first the natural or the physical, then the spiritual.

And we're seeing in Israel this demonstrated in the natural. You can go and find tomatoes growing in the desert. You can go and find orchards right in the middle of the Negev desert, all sorts of wonderful things suddenly come across groves and groves of palm trees.

But the point is that God has a physical fulfillment that the dry bones that have come together and formed the nation have yet got a second stage of rebirth when God will breathe his Holy Spirit into them. And over the page to verse 12 of Isaiah 51, I even I am he who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies? And then verse nine of the next chapter, break forth, shout joyfully together you waste places of Jerusalem.

For the Lord has comforted, but you can translate that, the Lord shall comfort his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. And here then we find in the final analysis that it is the Lord that will bring comfort. In Isaiah chapter 61, in verse 2, part of the gospel message is comfort.

We read of the Spirit of the Lord being upon him to bring good news to the afflicted. And then verse 2, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, the day of vengeance of our God, and to comfort all who mourn. That in its essence really has yet to be fulfilled.

It's referring to the tremendous day of mourning that's going to come across the whole nation of Israel nationally when revealed to them by the Spirit is the person of Jesus as the Messiah. A whole nation will mourn and the Holy Spirit will come and bring his comfort. It's going to be a wonderful day to grant to those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes.

The nation needs to know God as their Father. It's been said that there's no Jewish person who has made a sincere search to know God as Father who hasn't found God the Son. John 6 tells us, all that the Father draws to me shall come to me.

None can come to me except the Father draw him. And the Father figure for Israel is so important. And you can pick it up in this verse in chapter 30 of Proverbs.

Sorry I'm giving your fingers plenty of exercise. But look at this verse in Proverbs and remember it, Proverbs 30 verse 4. A question you can put to any Jewish person however near or far he may be from the Lord. And there's a hidden reference to the Father in this passage.

Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped the waters in his garments? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name? Father of Israel, Shepherd of Israel. What is his son's name? Yeshua Hamashiach. Surely you know.

That will give food for thought to 101 Jewish people. Amen. And therefore in the main, the media by which we bring comfort I believe is the Word of God in prayer, the Word of God in proclamation, and the Word of God in speech.

Thessalonians speaks of comforting one another with these words. Romans 15 speaks to us again of the encouragement of the scripture. I'll just read a passage from there for you.

Romans 15 verse 4. What the Word of God does for us, whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction that through perseverance and the encouragement, the comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. Amen. Now in Isaiah chapter 14, let's go back to that second verse there, says to speak kindly to Jerusalem.

That's representative of the whole nation. To speak to the very heart of the nation and to tell her that her warfare has ended. Now that's a kind of mysterious exhortation, isn't it? The term there used for warfare is related to Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts.

And it refers to a kind of testing in military service. And whether you recognize it or not, Israel has been representative of the Lord's revelation of the Lord. She's been in the front line of spiritual warfare for her three and a half thousand years of existence or non-existence as a nation.

And she's gone through nothing else but tough times as the Lord's chosen vessel. And we are told here to tell her that that period of service, hard service, that's what it means, has ended. And virtually, we could say virtually it's coming to an end.

And why can we say that? Because her iniquity has been removed. Why can we say that? Because the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. And the revelation of that to the nation is the next stage that's coming.

That she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. You can interpret that in the way that it's written. But as I understand it, it was Middle East custom years ago for a wealthy sheik to go through the encampment of poor people who would perhaps have nailed to the posts of their tent a list of the debts that they had.

And looking for some wealthy sojourner to help them in their need. And occasionally one of them would stop and would impart the money that was needed and would write across that paid and double back that leaflet of their debts. And it was called receiving the double.

And in one sense, a very real sense, in that sense, Israel has received the double because Jesus had become the Lamb of God for that nation. He's paid the full price for her sins. And we are told here that her iniquity has been removed.

Just as you know that experientially, the time is coming when the whole nation will know that. Zechariah tells us, let's turn to the book of Zechariah, chapter 13, the first wonderful verse. We read, in that day, the day of revelation, a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for impurity.

And that is available now in the land of Israel today. For those of you who weren't here yesterday, there's something like 60 messianic Jewish fellowships. There are about a hundred other fellowships, Arab, Russian, Spanish, Moroccan, Romanian, you just name it, all sorts of languages.

And the Lord is moving in a mighty way across that nation. The fountain is already opened and there's a body of believers that's becoming bolder and bolder. When I first went to Israel in 1969, the believers there were too scared to evangelize on the street.

They wouldn't give out a tract. There was no evangelism. But today, I've heard of aeroplanes riding across the sky in that smoke that can be released.

Messiah has already come. There are city-wide campaigns up and down the country. Recently, there was a big outreach, a big rock music festival where you'd have Jewish and Arab evangelists in their rad down in the Negev desert.

So God is moving, the fountain is opened, but the point is the whole nation doesn't yet know it. But it's becoming available and they have received what we call the double. Now the full revelation to the nation, in my belief, will come during the time of Jacob's tribulation.

Probably that time is the same time as the Russian allied armies come down with Muslim nations. You read about it in Ezekiel 38 and 39. This is referred to quite clearly in the opening verses of the New Covenant chapter, Jeremiah 31.

Let me just take you there because it's linked to what we're going to be talking about in Isaiah 40. We read in the end of the preceding chapters, chapter 30 of Jeremiah, that wrath has gone forth, a sweeping tempest, verse 23. Verse 24, the fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has performed and accomplished the intent of his heart.

In the latter days, you will understand this. At that time, at what time? Tribulation time, declares the Lord. I will be the God of all the families of Israel and they shall be my people.

Thus says the Lord, the people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness when it went to find its rest. But in the AV, it reads, when I caused Israel to rest. It's an act of the Holy Spirit in revelation, bringing the nation to rest.

The Lord appeared to him from far saying, I've loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, I have drawn you with loving kindness. So that speaks to the time when Israel will have this revelation of sin removed, sin pardoned, and of peace with God that we ourselves experience today.

And if we go on in this chapter of Isaiah 40, we pick up where John the Baptist began to quote from in his ministry, a voice is calling, clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness. Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low and let the rough ground become a plain and the rugged terrain a broad valley.

Now there's a tremendous amount here in this passage. I want us to realize that the same people who are called to comfort God's people are the same people to whom it said prepare you the way of the Lord in this passage. And how do we prepare the way of the Lord? By comforting his people, by prayer, by taking note of how John had this revelation, Luke chapter 3. In Luke chapter 3, before you find him saying repent, prepare you the way of the Lord, we have a long list of political figures, five of them.

Chapter 3 verse 1, the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate was governor of Judah, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Aeturia and Traconitus, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, all political heads. In the religious field you have Ananias and Caiaphas, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, but to whom did the word of God come? It didn't come to the United Nations today, it hasn't come to the Archbishop of Canterbury, it's not even come to Orthodox Jewry, it came here to the one who was clothed in camel's hair, who led a life of humility, John the Baptist, and it came to him in the wilderness. And if you friends are feeling to be a bit in the wilderness, it's a wonderful place to hear the word of God.

When you shut out all the voices of this world, that's where you're going to hear God's word. Even sometimes the voices that come through the Christian media, some of that needs to be filtered by the word of God and by the Holy Spirit. And we read that in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, it's the still, small voice.

And he came and he preached as a course of repentance. The Lord said, didn't he, to his disciples, I go to prepare a place for you, which is wonderful, but are you preparing a place for the Lord in your hearts? Are you and I preparing to meet our God? And I think both facets are involved. Here though, the picture is widened to make smooth in the desert, you can personalize this passage in Isaiah, you can apply it to the nation, you can apply it to the church, certainly you can apply it to yourself, but let's apply it to Israel at this particular time.

It says that every valley will be lifted up and every mountain and hill made low. In other words, there are going to be earth shattering events before the return of the Lord. You read that here in the physical sense, in the spiritual sense, I'm quite sure it's going to happen.

In the physical sense, this is, I believe, literally fulfilled, that every mountain around Jerusalem, there are seven hills, and the actual temple site is sunk below vision. But if you look in Isaiah chapter 2, in verse 2, you read, and this has got a spiritual application, but it's good to have the physical because it helps us to realize the spiritual. In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains and will be raised above the hills.

Literally, it'll be the city set upon a hill. I'll give you some other scriptures to validate that. And all the nations will stream to it, all the Gentiles, they'll be saying, come, let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob, he'll teach us all his ways.

Many, many other parts of scripture speak of Jerusalem becoming the spiritual capital of this globe where international worship is evidenced from representatives of all nations. But for that to come about, there is a physical change and the temple site will become lifted up. Let me turn you to Psalm 97 as one example of when the Lord returns, this is what happens.

Verse 3, fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries around about. His lightnings lit up the world, the earth saw and trembled. The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

What an awesome happening when he returns. If you look in, there are about six of these, but just another one. The book of Nahum, which follows Micah, just sandwiched between Habakkuk and Micah.

And verse 5 of the first chapter, mountains quake because of him and the hills dissolve. Indeed the earth is upheaved by his presence. So I believe then every mountain and hill will be brought low and the valleys will be lifted up.

We can also interpret that as being man's pride being dealt with. The valleys of depression, discouragement being dealt with in our lives. The rough ground becoming a plain.

God will smooth away in our lives, our desert lives, for the knowledge of him to come. And when God's dealt with all of that in your life and mine and the life of the nation, when they're so brought low like Jacob was in that night of struggling with the angel, the glory of the Lord will be revealed. And we read it here, then the glory of the Lord will be revealed.

All flesh will see it together, an allusion to his revelation to the nation, but also his coming return to this globe. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Well that's something of what's contained there in that passage.

The earthquakes that are going to happen spiritually and otherwise. And we go on to read verse five, well verse seven, the grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows upon it. Surely the people are grass, the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

I struggled with this passage for a long time. I understand what the word of our God standing forever means, but what does the rest mean? I believe it means that all our humanistic ideas are just as so much straw that God is going to blow away, and it is being blown away. Every week there's a resolution in the United Nations, anti-Israel.

There have been more resolutions passed against Israel than any other nation, simply because they're God's people, and God is going to blow upon that. His word will stand forever and ever. At the moment Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, is in a real fix, because if he gives in to the Palestinian insistence for an independent state, then his own people will rebel, and there's a high probability of a Jewish civil war.

And if he doesn't give in to that insistence for an independent Palestinian state, then automatically Yasser Arafat will declare that state in May next year, 1999, in which case you're going to get a clash between the Palestinian armed forces and the Israeli army, so you're going to get internal strife. So it's heads they win and tails you lose. It doesn't matter.

He's in that kind of a fix, and God is putting them there, because they've got nowhere else to turn but him. Is God putting you in such a position? Because he says in his words, let's read some of the things he says about it, the word of our God stands forever. Let's just read, for example, speaking of all flesh as grass, let's go for example to Psalm 33, and see what the Lord says about our one world system, about the one world church, and we read that God in his sovereignty, Psalm 33 verse 10, the Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations.

He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart from generation to generation. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people that he has chosen for his own inheritance.

He didn't choose Israel because they were a nice, good people. He just chose Israel out of his sovereignty in election. He loves them because he loves them, not because they're lovable, and some of us who come from Jewish people could say we're not particularly lovable, but God loves us and that's an end of it.

Bless the Lord. In Psalm 2, and it's important where this Psalm is placed, it's the very second of 150 Psalms, so it's important, and the prophetic word is, why are the nations, why are the Gentiles in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his anointed. In the opposition to the nation and existence of the nation of Israel, it's really opposition to the return of Jesus, King of the Jews.

That's what we're seeing. Against the Lord and his anointed, let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us. Hidden reference to the Word of God.

Verse 5, Then he will speak to them in his anger and terrify them in his fury. As for me, I have installed my King upon Zion, my holy hill. God is the greatest Zionist in world history, and Zion is not a dirty word.

Zion speaks of the capital of Israel. He that touches you, says of Zion, touches the apple of his eye. Now, the apple of your eye is the pupil of your eye.

The most tender part of your body protects it in about four ways, the eyebrow, the eyelid, the eyelash, and the socket. In Jerusalem, the city of Zion is under God's constant protection. He has set Jesus on Zion's holy hill, which one day will be exalted above all the other hills.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Let me just read one or two other prophetic scriptures. Let me turn you to Isaiah chapter 62.

We were reading this passage yesterday, but we didn't read the middle verses, and this is prophetic of what God will demonstrate through the reborn nation of Israel, when the whole nation is born again. Verse 2, Isaiah 62, the nations will see your righteousness, that's the reflected righteousness of the Lord, all kings your glory, and you'll be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name. You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

It'll be as though that God has reached into the rubbish bin, and he's picked out a gold, a glittering golden crown out of the rubbish bin. That's you and me, after he's polished us up. And we read here that there'll be like a royal diadem in the hand of your God, and it will no longer be said to you, forsaken, nor to your land will it any longer be said, desolate, but you'll be called Hepzibah, my delight is in her, and your land, Beulah, married.

Why? Because the Lord delights in you, and to him your land will be married. That is why we are told in this same Isaiah chapter 40, and I'm reading from the NIV here, in verse 9, the NIV has what I believe is the accurate interpretation, translation. You who bring good tidings to Zion, in other words, the same ones are exhorted to bring comfort to his people.

Go up to a high mountain, you who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, proclaim the word of God to principalities and powers before man and before God. Use the power of proclamation, lift it up, and do not be afraid, say to the cities of Judah, behold your God. I think that's a fantastic thing, I believe we can speak that into the atmosphere while you're in Jerusalem or even here, speaking of the nation itself.

And we need to remember that the veil has to be taken away before they can behold their God. In other translations that word behold is put like look or see, but there's something contained in the old-fashioned phrase behold, which I think is important, and to use that particular approach to it. So let's go on a little bit more in these passages of Isaiah 40 before I come to a close.

The call then is to us that the word of God will stand forever. We're reminded about that in the Olivet Discourse three times, that my word shall never pass away. Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Matthew chapter 24 and verse 32. You remember, I'm not sure whether it was Derek outlining the fact that there are actually 12 progressive signs answering the question from the disciples, what will be the sign of your coming? Various people have various answers to that. I'm going to give you mine, because the last one of them is contained in verse 32, what will be the sign of your coming? In one sense it's the preaching of the gospel to the whole world, but the instrument to bring that about, if you read in Revelation 7, is the reborn nation of Israel.

She is involved with a team of evangelists that seem to number 144,000, probably symbolic of the nation, in taking the gospel to the four corners of the globe, during or after the tribulation period, something of that order. And here, the sign of his coming, I believe, is this. Verse 32, Matthew 24, now learn the parable of the fig tree.

This is the fig tree that three chapters earlier, Matthew, is found cursed and withered. It refers to the nation of Israel, dried up, scattered, non-existent virtually for 2,000 years. We're told that when its branches already become tender, in other words, come to life again, when did it come to life? 1948, 50 years ago.

And puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Summer, what is it? It's the approach to harvest time, isn't it? When you see the fig tree around again, you know that summer is near. And even so, when you see all these things, recognize that he, who's he? Jesus, capital H, he's near, right at the door.

So when Israel is back on the world map, you know that the return of the Lord is not far away. And truly, I say to you, this generation, this race, that can be translated, that's a Jewish race, will not pass away, whatever Hitler may have done, until all these things take place. Heaven and earth may pass away.

We can have our atomic explosions and everything else, but my words shall not pass away. Now that day and hour, no one knows, even though you'll get another book out on the Christian market tomorrow, telling you that on July the 12th, 2000 and something, Jesus will return. We're told here, not even the angels of heaven or the sun, but the Father alone knows.

And we're told that the days will be like the days of Noah. We know what the days were like in days of Noah, so evil that God brought judgment on the whole earth, and we're going in that direction. So the Word of God will not pass away, that's what we are told.

Let's go back to Isaiah chapter 40, before I close, and see something here of the sovereignty of God over the multitudes that are opposing his end-time purposes. Wonderful words in the second part of Isaiah 40 about his acts of creation. We read in verse 15, Behold the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales.

The nations represent the gentile opposition, unbelieving opposers to God's end-time purposes. And God says here in the Word that there's nothing God can breathe on them, they're absolutely nothing. And verse 17, All the nations are as nothing before him, regarded as less than nothing and meaningless.

And verse 22, It is he who sits above the vault of the earth, its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. It is he who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Verse 26, Lift up your eyes on high and see

who has created these stars, the one who leads them forth, their host by number, he calls them all by name, because of the greatness of his might and the strength of his power, not one of them is missing.

This is the one, numbers the stars, names them, numbers the hairs on our head, and he knows his nation Israel. And he asks a series of questions then of his people Israel, and here they are. Why do you say O Jacob, and assert O Israel, my way is hidden from the Lord? Why does the nation say God's forgotten all about us? We don't even know where he is.

Do you remember what the people of Israel did when Moses disappeared up the mountain for 40 days? They went off into idolatry. This is the nation today. Why do you say that God doesn't even know what's going on? And we go on to read here that his understanding is inscrutable, that he gives strength to the weary, that when you come to the end of yourself, when you let God, instead of struggling yourself, take you by the hand and lead you, then you'll know his power and his strength.

And this really, this passage, those who wait for the Lord, gaining new strength and mounting up with wings as eagles, that's addressed to the nation of Israel, in particular, primarily, even though we so often adapt it for ourselves. Let's remind the nation that God has chosen that people to be himself. You know, they find it strange that we believe that they are a chosen people.

They will say, why doesn't God choose somebody else for a change, because of all the suffering they've gone through. But there's one nation that God has chosen, as he said to Samuel in 2 Samuel chapter 7, what one nation on earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem as a people for himself. There's one nation, Jacob, that he's given his laws to, the Word of God to.

There's one nation that God has set aside for that period of hard service, which is coming to an end. And that is pictured in a strange verse in Amos chapter 3 verse 2, where, let me turn to it so I might remember it properly. Amos chapter 2, you only have I known, he says to the nation, you only, Amos 3 verse 2, therefore I have punished you for your iniquity.

What an awesome choice. You only have I known, therefore I shall punish you for your iniquity. God chastens the ones whom he loves.

And therefore, Lord, my friends this morning, my challenge to you is that you take up this exhortation to start to bring comfort to the people of God. Now if you're like me, you've been praying for Israel for quite a long time, you may have come to the point of lukewarmness, of a sense of weariness, and you want to be renewed in your strength, and you want to be renewed in your vision. I'd like to pray for you this morning, if you number amongst that category.

You find the way tough because there's plenty of spiritual opposition, and I want to encourage you through praying for you this morning. You may be amongst those who have never committed yourself, even as many of you did yesterday, that want to take up this challenge to pray for the nation, and to bring comfort to God's people. If so, again I'd like to challenge you to stand to your feet.

I'm going to bring this scripture before you do. The Lord will not abandon his people on account of his great name, because the Lord has been pleased to make you, as Israel, a people for himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.

And you will have the enemy, the tempter, telling you to ease up. He's telling me that, to ease up. You know, you've done it long enough, you're tired, sit down.

We need supernatural renewal. We need a new call from God. He giveth power to the weary, and we shall mount up with wings, and we shall run and not faint.

Now let's take that then, let's be amongst those who do not wish to sin against the Lord, by losing not just the vision, but the heart to pray through. Now will you stand to your feet, hold your hands up to heaven. I'm going to ask Brother David if he'll come and pray for us, including myself, that we'll have a strong revisit by the power of the Holy Spirit on all of us here this morning.

Amen.

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