

# Christ In The Old Testament

## Lesson 9

### Isaiah 40:1-3, Isaiah 42:1-9

To put **Isaiah 40** in to context, we must realize that the prophet had successfully presented a picture of great darkness in **Isaiah 39** and the preceding chapters. He had informed the people that Babylon would come and conquer the land, enslaving some people and killing many others. *“**Chapters 40ff. serve to answer the dark picture that the thirty-ninth chapter had created. They see the people of God in human bondage, yet they go far deeper and look to the people as being in bondage spiritually, subject to the taskmaster of sin. From this bondage there is to be a deliverer, the Servant of the Lord. As they face the future the people are assured that God will be with them in the vicissitudes of their existence**”* (**The Book of Isaiah**, Vol. III, Young, 17). With this in mind, let us remember that we too may find ourselves sinking deep in dark times. Life is not perpetually happy, and many people suffer from depression, sadness, anger, loss, bereavement, and poverty. The question that we must all ask ourselves, however, is what we will do in response to the suffering. When faced with trials, will we look to the future with gladness and hope, knowing that something far better awaits at the close of this life? Or will we look on and lose faith? There is no greater lesson that can be learned from this section of scripture, and students of all ages should come to an understanding of the hope and glory that we have in Jesus Christ!

*“**Comfort, O comfort My people,’ says your God” (40:1).*** It seems that this is a direct command to the prophets of that day to comfort the people of Judah with the words about to be unfolded in Isaiah’s book. After reading such prophecies of doom, it would be necessary for the messengers of God to go to those Jews who still remain righteous and offer hope to them.

**Discussion Question:** What does this chapter teach us about “good people” who still face times of suffering and trial?

In the case of this chapter, Isaiah is being told to comfort the blameless Jews because they have just been informed that they will be led into captivity right along with their more disreputable brothers and sisters. Are there times when good people in a nation suffer because of the vast majority of evil people there? Are there any examples in the Bible of this? Think about Daniel and his three friends, nicknamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. They were good men, but were led into Babylonian captivity in spite of their righteousness.

One of the primary lessons for us from **40:1** is that we have an obligation to comfort the people around us. When we see someone crying, it is our duty as Christians and representatives of God to investigate, or to be a shoulder to cry on when necessary.

*“Speak kindly to 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” (40:2).* Isaiah is now given the specific message of blessing that is to be presented to the people of Jerusalem. It is, first, to be spoken, which is simply indicative of how important proclaiming the message of God is. There are so many things in the Bible that must be spoken, and we cannot just leave them to the reader to discover – after all, it was the Ethiopian eunuch who proclaimed, *“How can I understand unless someone teaches me?” (Acts 8:31)* We cannot just hand somebody a Bible and expect it to do all the work of evangelism for us. Rather, we must “speak” the message. We must “call out to” those who need to hear the Gospel, just as Isaiah had to do these things with his message. *“Her warfare has ended”* is a phrase that means Jerusalem’s call to war is over. That is, there would come a time when there would no longer be a need to draft soldiers into a physical army. One thing that we must understand about this text is that it is written in the present-tense, but surely looks to the future for its fulfillment. Otherwise, the whole of the prophecy would be a lie – Jerusalem was besieged and went to war numerous times after this point in Jewish history, so the text must be intimating a future cessation of physical warfare. If this is true, then it is clear the Kingdom of Christians is what is meant (**2 Corinthians 10:3-6**). *“Her iniquity has been removed.”* Again, these things must be referring to a point in the future, because no sins were removed from the world until Christ died (**Hebrews 10:11-18**). What is the one thing that removes our iniquity? Is there any source but God from which the blessings of forgiveness flow? Consider **Acts 4:12**. *“That she has received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”* This verse actually has two interpretations, and both are valuable. First, the text could mean that

Jerusalem has received an adequate amount of punishment for her sins – that is, adequate enough to satisfy God’s righteous ends. Truly, there is no punishment that can make up for our sins, but one writer puts it well when he writes, *“If the word refers to suffering or punishment, it indicates that in God’s sight Jerusalem has suffered sufficiently because of her sins. Although she has not been punished as much as she deserved, nevertheless her punishment has been sufficient to accomplish its purpose”* (Young, 24). On the other hand, the word double could refer to a double blessing offered to Jerusalem after her many travails and punishments. Having suffered so much, God may be promising that a time will come when the gift of His Servant would be so far beyond what they truly deserve that it can only be described as “double.”

*“A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God’”* (**40:3**). This verse is quoted in **Mark 1:3** as being fulfilled by John the baptist.

**Discussion Question:** In what way was John the baptist Christ’s forerunner? How is he like Elijah (**Malachi 4:5-6**) and how did he help turn the hearts of the Jews back to God?

### **“He Will Bring Forth Justice To The Nation”**

Next, we want to consider a passage of scripture found in **Isaiah 42:1-9**, which is also quoted in **Matthew 12:18-21**. *“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations”* (**42:1**). Clearly, this is a Messianic prophecy, for there is no other servant of God who so fulfills the requirements of the verse. Here are some fulfilled prophecies to consider – *“He will not cry out or raise His voice”* refers primarily to the silence of Jesus before His accusers; *“He will not be disheartened or crushed”* is obviously making the point that Jesus was never discouraged by His lot, but looked forward to His death with courage; *“The coastlands will wait expectantly for His law”* may refer to the fact that much of

the Gospel was spread by Jesus around the coastal villages of the Sea of Galilee, His primary area of ministry (although, in the broader sense, it means that even people faraway will receive the Gospel at some point as a result of traveling Christians); *"I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you"* means that God will never abandon Jesus; *"To open blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison"* is a prophecy about the release of the Gentiles from the bondage of sin. Since God first made His covenant with Abraham, there was a dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles (even though Gentiles could be saved by converting to Judaism, there was always an ethnic barrier between the two groups of people). At the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, though, the opportunity for salvation was opened to all people, Jew or Gentile. God would no longer have a chosen people of physical heritage, but would form His Kingdom out of all people who would choose to come to Him (**Romans 10:11-13, Galatians 3:28**).

Many truths are revealed in **Isaiah 42:1-9**, beginning with the resiliency of Jesus Christ. According to **42:2-4**, the mission of Jesus would not be halted, no matter what obstacle He encountered. Jesus was powerful enough to defeat all of His foes, yet sensitive enough that He would do no harm to even a reed or the faint burning at the end of a wick. He had the ability to speak with such softness that His breath would not extinguish such a small flame! Even in the face of death and despair, *"He will not be disheartened or crushed."* There are many who claim that Jesus had several moments of weakness, first in the Garden as He was praying, and second on the cross when He proclaimed, *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"* (**Matthew 27:46**) On that contrary, these were not moments of weakness, for the prophecy in Isaiah makes it clear that not a moment of that would be found in His life.

*"I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations"* (**42:6**). *"The covenant between God and His people being in Christ, it is quite consistent with Hebrew usage to transfer the term to Christ Himself, in whom the covenant was, as it were, embodied. So Christ is called 'our Salvation' and 'our Peace,' and again, 'our Redemption' and 'our Life.' This is the ordinary tone of Hebrew poetry, which rejoices in personification and embodiment. A prose writer would have said that the Servant of the Lord would be given as the Mediator of a covenant between Jehovah and His people"* (**Pulpit Commentary**, Vol. X, 117). As a poetic statement, Jesus is the New Covenant. In literal terms, though, He is the Mediator (**Hebrews 12:24, 9:15, 8:6, 1 Timothy 2:5**), or the agent, of a the covenant. For

those who are unfamiliar with the term, a covenant is a promise, or more closely linked to a will.

***Discussion Question:*** How is Christ our covenant? What makes Him so uniquely qualified to be the “go-between” for God and mankind? Consider **Hebrews 4:14-16**.

*“I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images” (42:8).* This is an excellent verse to help contradict the claims of false prophets and modern-day-Messiahs. Without any doubt, Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of all things in the Old Testament. After Christ, no other prophet would come with His same power. No other Messiah would come (i.e., Muhammad, who claimed to be superior to Jesus Christ). No other human being would have Christ’s glory bestowed on Him.

*“Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you” (42:9).* What former things have passed today? Why would they need to pass away? For an answer, see **Hebrews 8:1-7, 13**. The “former things” are the edicts of the Old Law, given by Moses to the people of Israel. While those things were perfect in nature, they were impossible to keep by the Jews. It was necessary, therefore, to do away with those Old Laws and replace them with the more excellent Law of Faith, which is found in obedience to Jesus Christ.