*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 9- 14

Your God is Coming

**Monday, November 9 Isaiah 40:1-11**

*“Clear the way for the Lord”*

    The prophetic message of judgment has been given to the people of Israel and it has been a hard word.  Now, however, the message is to be one of hope.  Although the people have withered and fallen like dried grass because of their sin, God’s word as spoken by his prophet will not fail.  Just as he had said that judgment would come, and it had, so he now says restoration will come, and it will.  The idea of the Hebrew words translated “comfort” and “speak tenderly” is to “encourage with good news.”

     Isaiah sees a day when God’s servants will be crushed to the ground under the burden of their sin.  They will feel sure that all is lost and that all the promises of God have been nullified by their rebellion.  But the message to be proclaimed to them is that this is not so.  There is a highway in the desert for our God which will bring God to helpless Israel to set her free.  It will be a straight way cleared of mountains and valleys so he can come swiftly. Deliverance will come from God’s direct intervention.

*You are swift to come to my aid, Lord, and that encourages me.  Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 10 Isaiah 40:12-26**

*“To whom can you compare God?”*

Yesterday’s passage (40:1-11) verified God’s desire and intention to deliver his people, but can he do it? After all, from one perspective, he seemed unable to prevent the Babylonians from capturing the land and city in the first place, so why should we think he can deliver the people from them? This question becomes even more pointed when we recall that there is no evidence any people have ever gone home from captivity before. In all the long history of exile up until the fall of Babylon, there is no report of that ever happening. Thus, for God to say that it is going to happen for the Israelites is to make a large claim.

Isaiah’s approach to answering the question as to whether God can deliver from Babylon is to assert that God is unique. He is able to deliver not because he is greater than the Babylonian gods; he is able to deliver become he is the only God! The Lord is the sole Creator. The Lord is the Ruler of all nations and rulers. The Lord is absolutely superior over the gods, whether conceived as idols or as the heavenly host.

*What you promise, Lord, you will do. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 11 Isaiah 40:27-31**

*“Hope in the Lord”*

Isaiah anticipates the attitude of the exiles, who will be saying that they are either now outside God’s vision for them (“my way is hidden”) or else God has given up on them (“my cause is disregarded”). To this Isaiah responds that to think in this way is to have much too low a view of God. He reminds them of who God is, emphasizing the Creator’s endless power and wisdom, and his wonderful desire and ability to share that power with the “weak” and the “weary.” So he speaks of both the being and the actions of God.

He asks, rather incredulously, how they could say such things about God when they know perfectly well who he is and what he is like. He knows their situation perfectly, and he can and will do something about it. The fact is that the most vigorous things in creation (“young men”) cannot keep themselves going. They are not self-generating but are dependent on outside sources for their strength. God is not like that; he is self-generating, and that means he has abundant strength to give away to those who will wait for (or, “hope in”) him.

*We wait for you, Lord, trusting that you will give us new strength. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 9- 14

Your God is Coming

**Thursday, November 12 Isaiah 42:1-9**

*“Look at my servant”*

If we conclude that this passage is a prediction of the ministry of Christ, which I believe is a correct interpretation, we can see in these verses a number of indications about the dimensions of his ministry and its nature. First, that ministry is above all to restore God’s right order to the world. This should remind us that to suggest that the cross of Christ is only about forgiveness of sin is unwarranted. To be sure it is about that, but it is about much more. It is about dealing with all the effects of sin in the world and about restoring God’s work on all levels of society.

Second, it is a worldwide ministry. The Spirit who was on Christ impels his disciples to take his teaching to the ends of the earth, because people everywhere are waiting for it. His light is meant to shine through his disciples to all the nations. While it is popular in our day to insist that all people have light, but they just have a different take on what the lights consists of, Isaiah knows better. People who have made God in their own image are in the darkness, and they desperately need the light that streams from the Cross and the empty tomb.

*You restore justice, Lord, through your life, death and resurrection. Amen.*

**Friday, November 13 Isaiah 42:10-17**

*“Sing God’s praises”*

The “ends of the earth” are emphasized, along with “the sea,” the “dessert,” and “the mountaintops,” all conveying the idea of the extremes of the earth. Isaiah is proclaiming that the Lord is not simply the God of Judah. He is the God of the whole world, and what he is going to do for Judah has joyous implications for the whole world. If he can deliver Judah from all its captivities, then there is no one whose distress and difficulty is beyond his care and his delivering power.

God is depicted as a warrior coming to the defense of people. If it seems to them that he has kept silent for a long time as they have endured the Exile, that time is coming to a rapid close. Just as the nine months of gestation come to a sudden climax in birth, so God is going to birth a new thing on behalf of his people. Whatever mountains or rivers may stand in the way, they will present no obstacle to God. He will make a smooth way for his people to travel on, and even though they are blind, he will lead them, giving them light for their darkness.

*We wait patiently for your return, Lord, for the new heaven and new earth. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 14 Isaiah 42:18-25**

*“You refuse to act on what is right”*

Israel has become “blind” and “deaf” under the ministry of Isaiah and all the prophets. The more they heard of God’s admonition and instruction, the more “blind” and “deaf” they became. Because God does what is right, he made his truth as great and glorious as possible. He gave it in the wonder and terror of Mount Sinai and adorned it with the lives and the witness of saints and prophets through the years. Yet everything he did seems to have been of no avail. The people plunged deeper and deeper into their sin until all they worked so hard for, and even they themselves, became “loot” and “plunder” for their enemies.

But now the prophet commands the “deaf” to listen. Perhaps the tragedy of the Exile will unstop their ears a little. He calls on them to ask why they are in exile. It is not by accident or because of Babylon’s great might. Rather, they are in exile because of sin against God. They did not obey his law and so broke their covenant with him. God brought them down to destruction in punishment for their sin, but no one seemed to get the point.

*We receive your correction, Lord, confessing our sin so we may be forgiven. Amen.*