

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 40:3-11, HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD? PART 2

In verse 2, a voice was commanded to speak kindly to Jerusalem and call out to her words of comfort. In the next 9 verses, there are three different voices of comfort raised. The messenger is not identified; it is the message that is important. This is not God speaking; God is referenced by the speaker. It does not seem to be an angel either; it is a person. Some theologians believe the voice to be that of Isaiah, but the text does not say that. The lack of identity in terms of the person speaking here, may have been echoed much later by the prophet John who fulfilled this prophecy when he said:

John 3:30³⁰“He [Christ Jesus] must increase, but I [John the Baptist] must decrease.

Matthew 3:3³For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!’”

Isaiah 40:3–4^{3A} A voice is calling, “Clear [פָּנֶה] the way [דֶּרֶךְ] for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth [יָשַׁר] in the desert a highway [מַסְלָה] for our God. 4“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;

The text does not say the voice is crying out while in the wilderness as some translations have it; the voice is crying out to command that a way be made in a wilderness. The New Testament application of this verse, however, does place the voice's crying out in the wilderness. That is an inconsequential change that acknowledges the fact that the fulfillment of the Isaiah prophecy occurred in the life of John the Baptist who was actually living in the wilderness during his ministry. We can't read that fact back into the Old Testament and reinterpret the Old Testament accordingly, because that text does not say that the voice was crying out in the wilderness.

Two imperatives or commands are involved here: clear and smooth.

Clear, פָּנֶה, means to turn to, towards, around, or away. Primarily, it means to turn. In this context, it means to prepare by making ready or suitable or equip in advance for a particular purpose or for some use, event, or other purpose. Clearing the way relates to removing obstacles along the way removing them as obstacles that would impede or make hazardous the journey being undertaken. It also refers to setting in order or arranging the way such that transit is made easy.

Smooth, יָשַׁר, means to be smooth, straight, or right. In this context, it means to level by making level or straight perhaps with the implication of tearing down or destroying. This suggests the work of straightening the way which also makes transit easier.

There was a practice at that time and place that called for preparing a way or a highway for a visiting dignitary or for a parade honoring a pagan deity. This kind of language would have been something the people would readily understand.

Way, דֶּרֶךְ, means way, road, or path referring to a road that is an open way for travel and transportation.

Highway, מְסִלָּה, means a highway used as a public road. This word represents a major road used for travel and transport. This refers to roadways that mark key routes of travel. They may have been engineered and constructed of stone, gravel, or other materials.

“The creation of a road that is *straight*, unmistakable (*highway* or *causeway*), level and smooth pictures a journey made without difficulty and therefore with certainty of arrival” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 244].

Unger understands “way” to refer to one aspect of eschatological fulfillment, and “highway” to refer to another, specifically to the First and the Second Comings of Messiah. “It contains a command to prepare (clear) ... the way of the Lord. Make straight ... a highway (*mesilla*, ‘a raised causeway, a superhighway’) for our God. The simple ‘path’ or ‘road’ (*derek*) has in view the first advent, but the ‘raised causeway’ embraces the second advent, which alone will exhaust the meaning of this prophecy” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1248].

We know that there will be some catastrophic geological changes on earth’s surface during the Tribulation. Verse 4 may continue the metaphor of spiritual preparation for the coming of the Lord, or it may refer to actual changes that make the highway of the Lord passable for the remnant to return to Israel from the four corners of the earth at the end of the Tribulation. “Isaiah employs a wealth and variety of figures to set forth the truth that the preparation for the Lord’s coming will be complete. Inwardly and outwardly all will be in readiness for Him. Whatever had been a hindrance will be entirely removed. The sins of the nation, which had brought about the period of indignation and had kept God from His people, will be removed so that they will no longer stand in the way of His appearance among His own. The way stands clear and straight so that travel over it may be with no impediment whatever” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:30].

This prophecy cannot refer to the return to Israel at the end of the Babylonian captivity; no one prepared the way for the Lord to enter into the land with His people at that time. This cannot be a picture of the Lord leading the captives back into Israel. This prophecy represents the Lord coming to His people, not coming with His people. The people are to prepare the way for Him to come. The people returned in poverty to a destroyed Temple and a devastated city of Jerusalem. However, later, at the First Advent, John the Baptizer prepared the way for the Lord to offer Himself as King to the Israelites. Even later still, at the Second Coming which is still future, Christ Jesus will return as the Messiah King and gather the people to Himself and take them into Israel to enjoy the fulfillment of their unconditional covenant promises.

The highway in question here is metaphorically for the use of the Lord; God actually does not need a literal highway to get anywhere. There will be a literal highway for the Israelites to use when returning to Israel after the Tribulation ends. We discussed that highway in connection with Isaiah 35:8-10. “Some hold that Isaiah 40:3-5 only refers to God coming to Israel and not to the return of the exiles. Such a view, however, appears to be at odds

with Is. 35:8-10 in which the ransomed of the Lord will return on the highway of the Lord. Therefore, the way in the wilderness will serve both as the way the Lord will come to Jerusalem and as the way the people will return from exile. This way will be characterized by the reunion of God and His people" [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1060-1061].

Clearing the way in the wilderness and making smooth the highway in the desert are also metaphorical references to removing the obstacles that the people, specifically, in this context, the Israelites, have placed in the way of their relationship with Yahweh. The people are to prepare the way by removing those obstacles by means of repentance, meaning a change of mind, and faith. Unfortunately, those obstacles have yet to be removed, and they will not be removed until the end of the Tribulation when the nation finally accepts and receives her King (Mt. 23:39). John the Baptizer referred to this change of mind and faith at the First Advent when he said:

Matthew 3:8 ⁸"Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

Isaiah 40:5 ⁵Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh [בְּשָׂר] will see *it* together [יַחְדָּו]; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (NASB).

John the Baptist was the fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy as it pertained to the First Advent.

Matthew 3:1–3 ¹Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ²"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'" (cf. Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4, John 1:23).

The prophet Malachi further connected Isaiah's prophecy with Elijah and the Lord elaborated on that connection, leaving no doubt that Isaiah's prophecy was connected to the First Advent of the Messiah King.

Malachi 3:1, ⁵ ¹"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.... ⁵"Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 11:9–10 ⁹"But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. ¹⁰"This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' ... ¹⁴"And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come.

Once the way is prepared, the glory of Yahweh will be revealed for all to see. That is what Isaiah referred to when he revealed that "all flesh will see it together." That is something that has not yet happened either. In Luke, John the Baptist related this Scripture, the glory

of the Lord, with the salvation of all flesh. This is the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 40:5: “⁵and the glory of the Lord will be seen, and all flesh will see the salvation of God, for the Lord has spoken” (LXX). This applied Isaiah’s prophecy to not only the Israelites, but to the world’s Gentile population as well. This too argues against the idea that Isaiah’s words applied only to the return to the land of Israel out of the Babylonian captivity.

Luke 3:2–6 ²... the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. ³And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins [salvation]; ⁴as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ⁴MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. ⁵EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH; ⁶AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.”

“It is better to see salvation as the consciously chosen, less abstract equivalent for manifesting the glory of God. The LXX’s rendering, which Luke follows, may have been motivated by a desire to show how God’s glory is manifested; that is, God’s glory is seen in his salvation.... The choice of the alternative rendering, however, accurately reflects Isaiah. God’s display of salvation before all is something Luke has already suggested (2:30-31)” [Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke 1:1-9:50*, 295].

John, of course, was preaching about the First Advent of the Messiah, but, due to the Israelite rejection of the King and His Kingdom, the ultimate fulfillment of the revelation of the glory of God and the salvation of God will not occur until the Second Coming. The whole world did not see Jesus at His First Advent, but the whole world will see the glory of the Lord when He returns as the Messiah King. We could argue that the glory of the Lord was not visible in the First Advent except in the transfiguration, but His glory will be manifested before the world at the Second Coming. Isn’t that what Isaiah predicted?

Matthew 24:29–30 ²⁹“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

“Putting the entire Isaiah quotation together, one sees that John calls the humble to prepare for God’s powerful coming. After John’s ministry comes a manifestation of power, the salvation of God. As [Luke] 2:30 shows, God’s salvation resides in Jesus. This salvation is available to all ([Luke] 2:31-32). While the people are called to prepare in [Luke] 3:4 for God’s salvation, in [Luke] 2:31 God prepares salvation for them in a special person” [Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke 1:1-9:50*, 295].

Flesh, בְּשָׂרָה, in this context, means humankind, i.e., all of the living human inhabitants of the earth understood according to the common trait of having flesh. In English, this might be a little clearer if translated to read “humanity” (ISV, HCSB) or “humankind” (NET Bible).

The word “flesh” may be an indication of mankind's frailty and the transitory nature of human life after the Fall.

Together, יחדו, means together, those joined together, or all together or all at once. The point is that when the glory of the Lord is revealed to the full extent prophesied by Isaiah, all mankind will see it at the same time, and that will not happen until the Second Coming as we just noted in Matthew 24:29-30. This is clearly an eschatological end times event. The comfort spoken of in verse 1, will indeed be experienced by the Israelites when they see the glory of the Lord, and not only the Jews, but the Tribulation saints will also find comfort in His coming. Presumably, the antichrist and the earth dwellers will not be quite so happy to see Him coming! We have to remember, while the Israelites could not see it, the glory of Yahweh was residing in the Temple right up until the time it was destroyed by the Babylonians, and it has not returned since that time. This will be an incredible time in not only Israel's history, but in world history. The concept of the returning glory that all mankind will see together, is another argument against the idea that Isaiah is referring to a return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity.

Constable believed that part of this prophecy involved Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity. “All flesh would marvel at His liberating the Israelites and bringing them back into their land” [Thomas L. Constable, “Isaiah” in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:109]. The problem is that this is clearly something that pertains to the entire world—all mankind. I'm quite certain that many people around the world did not know about Judah's captivity in Babylon nor their return to the land of Israel after 70 years. But this verse clearly says that every human being on earth will see the revelation of the glory of Yahweh. Constable also recognized the eschatological conclusion to the revelation of the glory of Yahweh, but he claimed elements of both are in this verse which is an understanding of the revelation I reject. It cannot pertain to the return from Babylon. “Even more, everyone would stand amazed at His saving humankind through the coming of Messiah. Still more impressive would be the eschatological demonstration of His glory that would accompany Messiah's return to earth to rule. All these occasions of salvation are probably in view in this verse” [Thomas L. Constable, “Isaiah” in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:109]. Constable recognizes the short-term, long-term nature of some of Isaiah's prophecies, but I do not think this is one of them.

We know all this will come to pass because Yahweh has spoken. He who is sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and who cannot lie will certainly accomplish His will. This truth was revealed to Isaiah by God Himself, and it must come to pass.

Next, the fleeting nature of mankind's life is contrasted with the permanence of God's Word. This too relates to the promise just made that the glory of Yahweh would be revealed to all mankind. God's Word is not only absolute truth, it is eternal. This may relate to mankind's inability to save himself.

Isaiah 40:6–8 ⁶A voice says, “Call out.” Then he answered, “What shall I call out?” All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness [תְּקוֹדָה] is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath [רוּחַ] of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

The speaker, the one who commands, remains unidentified here, but it may be that Isaiah, the prophet, although not specifically identified either, is the one who is commanded to call out. Most people believe that to be the case, but it is speculative. The text does not use the definite article with the “the voice,” that is, the one commanding the prophet to cry out. The text refers to “a voice” which renders it indefinite; therefore, that voice remains unidentified. It seems, however, that this “voice,” which is speaking to whoever has been commanded to cry out, most likely refers to Yahweh. Who else would be giving commands and revelation to Isaiah but the Lord in a context such as this?

The context was set earlier when it was revealed that Jerusalem's warfare was going to end and that the nation's iniquity had been removed. In these verses, it is revealed that Yahweh is capable of destroying the nation's enemies, and it is certain to come to pass. His Word guarantees it.

These words are words of comfort and hope for the Israelites. Green grass and the beautiful flowers quickly spring up, but their lifespans are brief and then they wither and at least go dormant, if not die. They are also quite vulnerable to the frequently harsh conditions the earth and its weather patterns impose on the vegetation such as wind, heat, cold, and drought, which may also lead to a shortened lifespan. In the Middle East, hot, dry east winds can scorch and wither vegetation in no time. Flowers are beautiful when they are in bloom, but that is short-lived beauty that fades, dies, and returns to the earth from which it came. The metaphor is telling us that human life is no different. It is fragile, short-lived, deeply affected by adverse conditions, and dies. Beyond the uncertainties of life lived in a world run by Satan, to the extent God allows him to run it, human life certainly cannot stand in the face of an all-powerful God who can destroy life with the breath of His mouth.

The word translated “loveliness” in the NASB is **דָּוָה**, which means goodness, kindness, loyalty, or faithfulness usually referring to an unfailing kind of love, kindness, or goodness, often used of God's love that is related to faithfulness of His covenant. In this context, a number of translations interpret this word to mean “goodness” or “loyalty.” The NASB and the NKJV translate the word as “loveliness” and the RSV translates it as “beauty.” Gesenius' lexicon relates it to the synonym **חַן** meaning favor, grace, and acceptance which then refers to **דָּוָה** signifying grace in the sense of beauty. I do not get that connection, grace in the sense of beauty, and this does not seem to fit the context anyway. “The normal meaning of **דָּוָה** ('faithfulness, loyalty, devotion') fits very well in the argument. Human beings and their faithfulness (verbal expressions of faithfulness are specifically in view ...) are short-lived and unreliable, in stark contrast to the decrees and promises of the eternal God” [NET Bible, s.v. “Isaiah 40:6,” 1284, n. h]. The NASB seems to be saying that the loveliness of human beings is transitory and fades away, but what loveliness does fallen humanity possess in the first place, especially in relation to the only righteous, holy God? It fits the context better to suggest that humankind's loyalty or faithfulness is fickle, unreliable, and prone to changing into disloyalty and unfaithfulness at any moment; therefore, it resembles the grass and the flowers that spring up only to quickly die.

The word flesh is a reference to the transitory and frail nature of human life. "Men of flesh are weak and mortal; their life is brief and soon comes to an end. In this respect it is like the grass, for under the burning rays of the sun the grass may soon dry up" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:32]. This is not simply a problem in terms of physical life; it is a problem in mankind's spiritual life as well.

There are a number of comparisons in the Scriptures comparing the grass with the short-lived and frail nature of human life. These Scriptures often compare the transitory, fickle, and unfaithful existence of man with the eternal and loyally faithful nature of God. Of course, the remedy to mankind's transitory condition, physical and spiritual, is faith.

Psalms 103:15–18 ¹⁵As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. ¹⁶When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer. ¹⁷But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them.

Peter related this truth to the new birth and to the eternal Word of God. When we are born again, we move from the realm of the perishable into the realm of the imperishable. God's Word is always imperishable.

1 Peter 1:22–25 ²²Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, ²⁵BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

The breath of God not only animates life, (Gen. 2:7), but it can also bring death according to the will of God. The grass withers and the flower fades when the breath of God blows on them with the intention that they should wither and die. Breath, רִיחַ, means breath, referring to the breath of the mouth, wind, or spirit. This wind is probably representing the Hamsin or Sirocco winds that blow across Israel out of the Arabian desert in May before the rainy season begins. God directs the winds when and as He sees fit, if He has a particular reason for so doing, and the reference here conforms to that truth.

Just as the grass withers and the flower fades, which identifies impermanence, the Word of God is permanent, i.e., eternal. "To God's word there is a permanent character. Unlike the flesh of man, which withers and fades, it stands forever. It rises up, stands, and endures. In contrast to all flesh with its perishable nature, the word of God is imperishable and endures forever. The thought is similar to that of our Lord's, 'The Scripture cannot be broken.' When God speaks, His word expresses the truth; and that truth cannot be annulled or changed" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:35].

Forever, עוֹלָם, means long duration, a long time, everlasting, and eternity. It has the sense of an indeterminate and unending time going on into the future. The Word of God is continually self-authenticating and being proven over and over again as a presentation of absolute truth, never failing and never being found false in any way.

Jesus Christ Himself said the Word of God is eternal.

Mark 13:31 ³¹“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

The truth of the Word of God as it is expressed here is meant to be of comfort to the Jews that Yahweh is going to do as He says which will be to end the wars in Israel and remove the iniquity from the people. “The imperishable nature of this word, however, has for its dark foil the perishable nature of all flesh, and all the beauty [goodness or loyalty] thereof. The oppressors of Israel are mortal, and their *chesed* with which they impose and bribe is perishable; but the word of God, with which Israel can console itself, preserves the fields, and ensures it a glorious end to its history. Thus the seal, which the first crier set upon the promise of Jehovah’s speedy coming, is inviolable; and the comfort which the prophets of God are to bring to His people, who have now been suffering so long, is infallibly true” [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:394].

The next voice is pictured presenting Yahweh to Israel. Buksbazen believes this Scripture is identifying the remnant personified as Zion and Jerusalem. “The prophet bids the faithful remnant of Israel, personified by the feminine figures of Zion and Jerusalem as the heralds of ‘good tidings,’ to declare to the cities of Judah the appearance of their God in power and majesty” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 333].

Isaiah pictures God, not called Yahweh here, in two roles: mighty warrior returning as the conquering King and as nurturing Shepherd. These aspects of the King will be elaborated on in the rest of the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:9–11 ⁹Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily [בָּהָר], O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift *it* up, do not fear [יִרְאָ]. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here [הִנֵּה] is your God!” ¹⁰Behold [הִנֵּה], the Lord GOD will come with might [הַזֶּקֶק], With His arm [זְרוֹעַ] ruling [מְשַׁל] for Him. Behold [הִנֵּה], His reward [שָׂכָר] is with Him And His recompense [פְּעֻלָּה] before Him. ¹¹Like a shepherd He will tend [רָעָה] His flock, In His arm He will gather [קָבַעַן] the lambs And carry [נָשָׂא] *them* in His bosom; He will gently lead [נָהַל] the nursing ewes.

The command to get up on a high mountain to proclaim the good news reflects the fact that ancient speakers often used a hill or a mountain as a sound amplifying location from which to conduct public speaking. Zion and Jerusalem are metaphors for the world leadership role of Israel during the Kingdom, the home and capital of the Messiah King who will rule the world, and as such the nation will be a herald to not only Israel, but to the world, “Behold your God!” “Particularly at the second advent, when Jerusalem will be exalted as the capital of the millennial earth, ‘Evangelist Zion,’ Zion, that bringeth good tidings, the ‘bearer of good news’, will respond to that call and lift up her voice fearlessly when she sees her glorious LORD, saying, ‘Here is your God!’” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary of the Old Testament*, 1249]. If the return from the Babylonian captivity is in view in this verse at all, which I do not believe it is, then it is as a type of the worldwide return that will take place at the end of the Tribulation. “[T]he promised coming of the Lord will not be in vain. Exile is not the last word for the Lord’s people—whether the exile in Babylon of old or the continuing ‘exile’ of his scattered

people. The homecoming is certain" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 245].

"Get yourself up" are words that are feminine in gender. Motyer believes this is reminiscent of the Jewish women in Old Testament history who celebrated great military victories. [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 245]. In Exodus 15:20, Miriam led the women in celebrating Yahweh's deliverance from the Egyptian Army at the Red Sea. In 1 Samuel 18:6-7, the women celebrated the victorious King Saul and David, singing "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." Psalm 68:1 celebrates the great host of women who proclaim the good tidings of Yahweh's blessings. Given the nature of the deliverance the Israelite remnant will experience at the end of the Tribulation, that is a possibility, but it is probably more abstract than that. The nation will be the lead nation in the world finally fulfilling the role they were created to do which was to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6).

The good news is to be proclaimed with strength and without fear.

Mightily, כֹּחַ, means strength and power. It also represents an element of authority. Those proclaiming the good news of Yahweh's deliverance are doing so at the command of Yahweh through the prophet; therefore, they are speaking with His authority. They have no power themselves, but His power is sufficient for them.

Fear, יָרָא, means to be in fear, to be afraid. There is no longer any reason for the Israelites to fear. Their warfare has ended and their iniquity has been removed. The Kingdom has begun, and the King has returned to assume the throne.

Behold, הִנֵּה, is an interjection demanding attention and meaning behold, lo, see. This word is an emphatic particle in that it draws the special attention of the reader to something that is new or unexpected. After centuries of divine temporal discipline, the nation will finally receive her King. The NASB uses the word "here" to translate it in verse 9, but I think "behold" would have been better (KJV, NKJV, ASV, ESV, YLT ["lo"]). "Behold your God" captures the emphasis more than "Here is your God" represents emphasis.

They are to behold the presence of God; He is right there in their midst. "The essence of the message is: 'Look, it's God.'... [S]alvation is neither more nor less than the divine presence. God does not save his people with programs sent from afar. Neither does he save them with theological conceptions coolly administered from on high. He comes!" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 54].

The next two uses of the word "behold" represent His power to wage war and defeat His enemies. They are to behold His coming with power and might to deliver them from destruction at the hands of antichrist.

Might, הִתְקַח, means strong, stout or hardened, mighty, and powerful. When used of Yahweh, it brings to mind the divine attribute of omnipotence.

Arm, אָרֶמֶץ, means arm, shoulder, or strength, power, and force. In this context, it is used as a theological metaphor for God's strength to deliver and to impose judgment.

Rule, מָשַׁל, means to rule, to have dominion, to reign referring to exercising authority over, as of nations or other entities. When the King comes to rule, it will be on the Davidic throne in Jerusalem during the Messianic Kingdom ruling where He will be ruling over Israel and the world. This prophecy can refer to no other time in history. It is not a reference to God's overall rule over all creation from beginning to end.

They are to behold the fact that He has the spoils of war with Him.

Reward, שָׂכָר, means wages, pay, or reward. It refers to the compensation one receives for work or services.

Recompense, פְּעֻלָּה, wages, recompense, payment, or reward referring to reward or punishment (whether tangible or intangible) based upon what a person deserves. The Lord's reward and recompense will be shared with those who belong to Him according to what each person deserves.

This is in accordance with the Scriptures that promise Israel the wealth of the nations.

Isaiah 61:6 ⁶ ... You will eat the wealth of nations, And in their riches you will boast.

Rather than viewing this in a strictly materialistic way; however, there is another way to view what it means that the Lord is bringing recompense with Him. This could be viewed as the deliverance He brings with Him when He returns, both physical and spiritual. He is going to deliver the Israelites from death at the hands of antichrist when He returns, but more importantly, He is going to receive the believing remnant to Himself at that time for entrance into the Kingdom. In Isaiah 40:2, it reads that Israel will see her warfare ended, and her iniquity will be removed. "God's 'works' and recompense metaphorically describe his 'salvific works' on behalf of his people. At this time he will be their 'Savior,' and he will share the benefits of his work of salvation with his people. Salvation is God's greatest work and his greatest gift to humanity" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 100]. The Lord does not need wages or reward; the whole of creation and everything in it already belongs to Him (Ps. 50:10). His recompense that is before Him must be a reference to the salvation of His people who are themselves His reward.

"The reference, however, need not be to the Babylonian captivity as such, but rather to the far more wondrous deliverance from the bondage of sin. A workman has earned his hire as the fruits or reward of his work, but God is deserving of His reward for His great victory against the enemy, the deliverance of man from his sin and its consequences. This is His great work. The hire, then, is found in the redeemed of the Lord, the little ones who are mentioned in the following verse" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:39-40].

We often say that Christ paid the sin debt for the whole world. The wages of that work are the salvation of all who believe. This includes not only individual people, but, at some point in the future, national Israel as well.

In contrast with the mighty arm of the Messiah King, the Warrior Deliverer, the compassionate, nurturing, gathering arm of the Shepherd is revealed. The two arms of the King highlight the two primary divisions of the book of Isaiah. Chapters 1-39 reveal His arm of judgment and chapters 40-66 reveal His arm of deliverance and compassion for His people.

The Shepherd's interaction with His flock is revealed by means of four verbs: tend, gather, carry, and lead.

Tend, רָעָה, means to pasture, to tend, to graze, and to shepherd. Figuratively, it refers to guarding, caring for, and ruling. It has the sense of being a shepherd, i.e., one who tends a flock of sheep and/or goats. This is a metaphor for the Messiah King; therefore, it is representing the leader of the Israelite flock. This metaphor brings to mind the discourse Jesus presented identifying Himself to the Jewish leadership as the Good Shepherd. They should have made the connection to this Scripture in Isaiah, but they did not.

John 10:11, 14-15 ¹¹"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.... ¹⁴"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ¹⁵even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Gather, קָבַץ, means to gather, to collect, to assemble, to grasp with the hand which indicates a personal interaction. This word may have the sense of gathering in one place. That is what will take place at the Second Coming; the Israelites will be gathered from all over the world into one place: the land of Israel.

Matthew 24:31 ³¹"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Carry, נָשָׂא, means to lift, to carry, to take away.

David implored Yahweh to be the Israelites' shepherd and carry them forever, and through Isaiah, Yahweh promised to do just that.

Psalms 28:9 ⁹Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.

Isaiah 46:3-4 ³"Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel, You who have been borne by Me from birth And have been carried from the womb; ⁴Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done *it*, and I will carry you; And I will bear you and I will deliver you.

Lead, נָהַל, means to guide, to lead, to guard, to provide for referring to take or to guide somewhere.

Jeremiah 31:9 ⁹“With weeping they will come, And by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, On a straight path in which they will not stumble; For I am a father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn.”

Ezekiel 34:15 ¹⁵“I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord GOD.

This Shepherd King is clearly the antitype of David, Israel's first faithful shepherd king.