

"Yet those who wait on the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not be weary; they will walk and not faint!" (Isaiah 40:31)

After the disheartening words to King Hezekiah from the Lord of hosts, at the close of Isaiah 39, that "days were coming when all that was in his house and all that his fathers had laid in store would be carried off into Babylon," the prophet Isaiah (beginning in chapter 40) was instructed to offer words of hope and comfort (presumably for those who would become captive) of a blessed future subsequent to God's judgment in the coming captivity!

And so, as we saw in last week, chapter 40 begins with words of comfort and consolation, looking beyond the time of their captivity to a day when "her iniquity would be removed," and a voice would be calling to "clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; and make smooth in the desert a highway for the Lord"!

In retrospect, we know that this was a prophecy for the future coming of John the Baptist but, more importantly, for the Messiah--but with no reference to, or recognition, by Isaiah at this point that the long-awaited Messiah would actually become the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53!

This is followed by words from Isaiah in the rest of chapter 40 which one writer calls "the greatest piece of poetic literature ever written," as Isaiah extols the God of Israel as Creator and Ruler of all the world and everything in it (and above it!), and the One in whom the people were to put their trust!

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning...that it is He who sits above the circle of the earth...who stretches out the heavens like a curtain....who reduces rulers to nothing?" And more!

Constable describes Him as "the incomparable, transcendent God" who not only created the world but presides over its affairs!

"It is He who sits above the circle of the earth...who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in...who reduces rulers to nothing...!"

Daniel put it this way (in Daniel 2:21-23): "It is He who changes the times and the epochs...removes kings and establishes kings...who gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding...who reveals the profound and hidden things... who knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him!"

Oswalt writes that while transcending the universe, and time, Isaiah leaves no doubt that the Transcendent One is also "a person with all that that means"! Proverbs 8:27-31 says that "when He established the heavens...and inscribed the circle on the face of the deep...and made firm the skies above...He rejoiced in the world, His earth, and had delight for the sons of men!" (And He even created us in His image!)

"To whom then will you liken Me that I would be his equal, says the Holy One. (The gods of Babylon?) Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these stars, the One who leads 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!" (Think about the 100 billion galaxies and the 100 trillion stars out there-- and still counting---as Jim Battle noted last night!)

Do you think your way is hidden from such a God? Or that in light of who God is that He could forget about His people in exile, or be ignorant of their condition and circumstances?

And could you ever imagine that if they would "behold such a God" they would turn from Him to worship idols (created by man), or to worship the stars (or the creation rather than the Creator). But this is what they did, for example in II Kings 17:16-18, bringing on the anger and judgment of God! (Despite being warned by God over and over, for example in Deuteronomy 4:19, to "beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the stars, all the hosts of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them, and serve them!")

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable! He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power! Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary!"

Wow!

Motyer sums it up best: "Their God (let's change it to "our God") is such (eternal, Creator, untiring) that we need never doubt His capacity; He is such (possessing unfathomable wisdom) that we must never expect to understand all His ways!"

Just "wait" on Him! The way David did it, in Psalm 27:13-14!

"I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait for the Lord! Be strong and let your heart take courage! Yes, wait for the Lord!"

Behold your God!

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