

Isaiah Chapters 40-55: Book of the Consolation of Israel

God's People are Comforted

40:1 -11 - the prophet is called to announce God's coming.

The background scene is the council of heaven,
from where the voices come.

vs. 1-2 - Introduction. Comfort, the Exile end is near

My people, your God are covenant words (Exodus 19:4-6)
Served her term refers to the Exile

vs. 3-5 - (Luke 3:4-6)

The way of the Lord is a common phrase in Second Isaiah,
the Lord who comes to restore his people

The glory of the Lord shall return (Ezekiel 43:1-5)

vs. 6-8 - the voice of God's herald proclaims the immutability of
God's Word in contrast to all living things (1 Peter 1:24-25)

vs. 9-11 - Here is your God - who comes in celestial grandeur,
yet is compassionate (Ezekiel 34)

Jerusalem/Judah- used in chapters 40-55

40:12-31 - Creator of the universe

vs. 12 - water (seas), heaven, and earth

vs. 13-14 - God is the source of all knowledge and wisdom
(Job 38:2 - 39:30)

vs. 18-20 - idols cannot be compared with him (Jeremiah 10:1-16)

vs. 21-24 - God the creator is lord of history circle is the horizon;
tent is the vault of heaven

vs. 25-27 - God is incomparable and omniscient
used in Second Isaiah

vs. 28-31 - omnipotent God is concerned for the people
he has created

vs. 31 - Wait expresses confidence that God will not desert his
people. (Psalm 25)

THE INCOMPARABLE CREATOR Isaiah 40:12-17

After the Israelites had been deported to Babylon, many of them doubted the power of God. They believed that Marduk, the god of Babylon, had won a victory over Yahweh, the Lord, the God of Israel. This chapter contains several speeches in which the prophet disputes with the exiles about this. He reminds them of the hymns they sang in the past. In their hymns they sang that God alone had created the heavens and the earth. The prophet points out that you cannot believe at one and the same time both that God created the heavens and the earth and that he lacks power.

These verses provide a good example of such disputation speeches. In verses 12 to 14 the prophet puts a series of questions to remind the exiles of their faith that God created the universe. Who taught God how to create? The Lord alone created the heavens and the earth and he needed no advisor. Based on this belief, the prophet concludes in verses 15 to 17 that compared to Yahweh the nations and, by implication, their gods, are to be reckoned as nothing. Israel should be assured of the power of God.

Often we, like the exiles, sing in our hymns words that we do not fully believe in practice. In particular, we sing that we believe God created the heavens and the earth even though we, like the exiles, doubt his power. If we really believed that God created the universe, we would always look to him to give meaning to our lives and not try to find our purpose elsewhere. And we would never imagine that anything could have a power over our lives greater than God's.